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A

VIEW

OF THE

MORAL STATE OF SOCIETY,

AT THE

CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

MUCH ENLARGED,

AND CONTINUED TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF
THE YEAR 1804.

WITH A PREFACE,

ADDRESSED PARTICULARLY TO THE HIGHER
ORDERS.

BY JOHN BOWLES, ESQ.

Ætas parentum pejor avis tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiore.

Hor.

"We are capable of moral Improvement by Discipline, and how much we
want it, need not be proved to any one who is acquainted with the great
Wickedness of Mankind."

BUTLER'S ANALOGY.

L O N D O N :

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PREFACE.

A CONSIDERABLE part of the following tract was published at the close of the last Century, and it was intended, as its title purports, to exhibit a view of the moral state of society at that period; but it formed only a part of a much larger publication, the object of which was intended to display the political, as well as moral state of society, at the awful and striking moment, when mankind were passing from one century to another.

Of the two topics discussed in the above-mentioned publication, it will be readily admitted that the state of morals was by much the most deserving of general attention. Every one is endued with moral feelings, but very few are qualified to become politicians. The

latter character, indeed, in a free Country like this, every man, more or less, assumes: but this practice rather implies the exercise of that right of free discussion, on political subjects, which is common to all, and of which all, in some degree, avail themselves, than the possibility of a general acquaintance with those deep and multifarious subjects, which involve the political interests of a State. On these subjects, the information of most persons must necessarily be superficial; and such persons will form their judgment, chiefly—either from the suggestions of those in a higher station, in whom they place most confidence, and who are able to look more deeply than themselves into the political machine—or from the productions of the press, which may happen to fall into their hands. A judgment thus formed must often be erroneous, for it will often be directed by those, who, in order to promote their own views of ambition or faction, will avail themselves of whatever confidence is reposed in them, to mislead. But the errors of judgment, thus produced, though certainly injurious to a State, are not, in ordinary times, attended with very serious or lasting consequences. A change of parties, the effects of experience, and, above all, that

right disposition of mind which prevails in this Country, soon counteract the mischiefs which such errors have occasioned, or supersede the feelings, which, for a time, were predominant, and which, at the moment, seemed to be invincible.

But on *moral* subjects every individual judges, spontaneously, for himself, from the intuitive impulse of that moral sense, which Providence has implanted in his breast, and which has received its bias and direction from education and habit.

On *these* subjects it is impossible for error to prevail, without producing the most mischievous consequences. In regard to morals, every person fills a distinct, and an original part, on the vast stage of social life. That part is virtuous or vicious, and, consequently, beneficial or injurious to the general interests, as the principles, sentiments, and habits, by which it is regulated, are in conformity, or at variance, with *sound morality*. The degree of weight and influence which each individual may possess, *as a moral agent*, must, indeed, depend, in a great degree, upon the rank and station, in which such individual is

placed, and which render the influence of example more or less extensive. But there is no one, however low or mean, whose conduct, in the above character, is not of real and substantive importance; and who is not, in some degree, either a blessing or a curse to Society.

While, therefore, any political disquisition can be expected only to produce a transitory effect, an investigation of the existing state of Morals is calculated, in its nature, to come home to the bosom and feelings of every individual. The subject of such an investigation involves, at once, the happiness of all, and the dearest interests of Society; it relates to concerns, on a due attention to which the welfare of every person, both in time and eternity, is made to depend, and which, by a tie that every one is capable of perceiving, are inseparably connected with the real and permanent welfare of the State. So strong, indeed, is this tie, so transcendantly powerful is the influence of morals on the political state of Society, that he is very unfit to be a Statesman, who does not consider the morals of a Country as his first concern, and who does not act invariably

upon the principle that—virtue is the only foundation of *sound* policy. These considerations will, it is presumed, be deemed to afford a sufficient reason, for detaching the moral from the political part of the above-mentioned work, and for presenting the former, in a distinct shape, with considerable additions*, to the notice of the public†.

* About half the matter, contained in the present pamphlet, is new.

† In detaching, however, the Moral from the Political part of the publication in question, the Author must not be supposed to retract any of the Political sentiments therein contained. On the contrary, he sees, unhappily, but too much reason to adhere to all the Political sentiments, which he thought it his duty to avow throughout the last War. It is with real concern that he finds confirmed, by the most direful experience, the reasonings which, from the very commencement of *that* War, a solicitude for the safety of his Country impelled him so frequently to obtrude upon the public, and the main design of which was to shew, that a War of so extraordinary a nature would admit of no safe termination, unless, by being made subservient to the restoration of the lawful Government of France, it should effect the overthrow of that Revolutionary Power, which sought the subversion of all legitimate authority; and that Peace, if pursued in any other course, would prove but a glittering dream, from which the Country would awake, only to see herself involved—either in a still more furious and desperate conflict—or in inevitable ruin. These opinions, alas! are now become indisputable truths! We have awoke from such a dream, and we may thank Heaven, that the former part

Would to Heaven that the upper ranks could be prevailed upon to consider, before it be too late, how much the morals, and, consequently, the fate of their Country, depend upon them! Their high elevation, and the extensiveness of the sphere in which they move, render their conduct a concern of universal importance, and give to their example an all pervading influence. The principles and sentiments, by which they are actuated, stamp the character of the age; and it is in their choice, whether the times, in which they live, shall be distinguished by virtue and happiness, or by

only of the above alternative is realized. The Author can moreover review, without any desire of retractation, the sentiments which, in his "Reflections at the conclusion of the War," he expressed in regard to the Peace of *Amiens*; and in which he steered a middle course, between those persons, who indulged hopes, since proved to be illusory, that the above Peace was consistent with security and capable of permanence—and those who, in their well-founded alarm at the dangers with which it was fraught, laid the whole blame of the transaction at the door of Ministers, without making any allowance for the state of the public mind—which was induced to support the war, solely by the confidence it placed in the pacific dispositions of Ministers, and in relation to which a Right Hon. Gentleman, whose eminent talents have been brilliantly displayed in condemnation of the peace, has observed that *no war was ever carried on with so universal a cry of peace as the last.*

vice and misery. When the Princes and Nobles of the earth promote, among their inferiors, the practice of Religion and virtue, they are, in the highest possible sense of the word, the benefactors of mankind ; but when, by their own profligacy, they induce others to disregard the sanctions of Religion, and the obligations of morality, they are the heaviest scourges of the human race, and the cause of more real injury to their fellow-creatures, than it is in the power of the most ferocious, sanguinary, and desolating conquerors to produce.

In this Country the vicious example of the Great, is, at the present time, attended with circumstances of peculiar aggravation. They have long possessed, and thank Heaven, they still retain, an invaluable advantage, to assist them in becoming patterns of Religion and virtue to their inferiors. During a reign of forty-three years, the Throne of this Country has displayed a model—formed upon those sacred rules which Christianity prescribes for the regulation of human conduct—and, by the most alluring example, inviting all persons to the performance of every Religious and moral duty. Such transcendant worth has ex-

cited universal admiration and love. The unfeigned solicitude, the unutterable anxiety, universally manifested, whenever any apprehension is entertained for the sacred life which shines forth with such benign refulgence, are, at once, a just tribute from an affectionate and a grateful people, and the most expressive acknowledgement, which they can make, of the inestimable value and the high importance of such an example. But how much more acceptable to the great Personage himself, and how much more beneficial to society, would it be to *imitate* his example, than to bestow upon it a *barren admiration* ! Instead, however, of imitation, what a lamentable contrast to that example, is generally observable in this Country ! What a glaring inconsistency prevails, between the feelings of admiration which it universally excites, and the neglect of the far greater part of all ranks, to exhibit any resemblance, even to those prominent, features in which its excellence chiefly consists—an unaffected but fervent piety—a regular and devout attendance upon the solemnities of Religion—and a truly virtuous and domestic life. While it is thus deficient in point of effect, it will serve only to enhance the guilt, and to aggravate the condemnation of a Country, which abuses so grossly one of

the choicest blessings, ever vouchsafed by Heaven to a favoured people.

In contemplating, however, the manners of the highest ranks, it is impossible not to look, with peculiar solicitude, towards that illustrious Personage, who, in the course of nature, and in the order of succession, is one day to ascend the Throne of this Kingdom. The example of that Personage is no less important, nay, in some respects, it is still more so, in regard to the morals of the Country, than that of his Royal Sire. But one degree removed from the Throne, he is so elevated as to be an object of universal and unceasing attention; but possessing, at the same time, in common with all his inferiors, the character of *subject*, he can mix in society in a manner, which would be incompatible with the dignity of the Sovereign. He becomes, of course, the attractive centre of that brilliant circle, which is usually denominated fashionable life; and his attractive powers are greatly increased by the disposition, which mankind have ever displayed, and ever will display, to worship the rising Sun.

For such reasons, the conduct of an Heir Apparent must have an effect upon the public

morals, which it is difficult adequately to describe. Whatever he does must promote the general interests, either of Virtue or of Vice. Even actions, in themselves indifferent, derive an importance from the station of such an agent, and operate upon the manners, which have a powerful influence upon the morals of the community. What an ascendancy then, upon those morals, must belong to the aggregate of his character, and the tenour of his life! If, by a regular and devout attendance upon divine worship, he display a sincere and ardent piety towards that Great and Awful Being, who placed him in his high station for the benefit of millions of the human race—and to whom he is responsible for the use he makes of his rank and influence; if he exhibit to the countless multitudes, who are ever gazing upon him, a pattern of filial duty, of conjugal fidelity, of paternal care; of domestic virtue, of personal regularity, temperance, and self-command; if he avail himself of the high authority, which must be attached to his sentiments, by manifesting his abhorrence of every species of vice, and by discountenancing the profane and the dissolute; if he promote that respect for the nuptial tie which, next to

Religious principle, is the main bond of society; if, in short, he invigorate, by all the means in his power, those principles, dispositions, and habits, which are inculcated and prescribed by the sacred rules of Christian morality; then must he be a blessing of inestimable value to his country and the world; a luminary of the brightest and most benign radiance; an object of admiration to all, whose admiration is of any value; then will he prove himself worthy of that Throne, to which he is so nearly allied, and, of which, virtue is the only solid support; then will he most effectually contribute to the deliverance of the people, whom he expects hereafter to govern, from that unexampled state of danger, to which, in common with the whole civilized world, they are now exposed.

It would be injurious to the illustrious Personage, who is more immediately interested in this general description of a pious and a virtuous Prince, to suppose that he can be displeased at such a description being presented to his view.

That illustrious Personage, if a recent publication has any just claim to authen-

ticity, seems to be fully aware, that his elevated situation subjects him, in an *especial* manner, to the strictest performance of every duty; and that more than ordinary circumspection and correctness of conduct are now required of him, in consequence of the extraordinary circumstances of the times. For, in the publication above alluded to, he is reported to say, with scarcely less elegance than truth, that *he has most solemn obligations imposed on him by his birth*;—and that *in these unhappy times, the world examines the conduct of Princes with a jealous, a scrutinizing, and a malignant eye*. To which most appropriate description of the disposition which marks this levelling age, he is pleased to subjoin a resolution, which reflects honour on his exalted rank—“No man is more aware than I am of the existence of such a disposition, and no man is therefore more determined to place himself ABOVE ALL SUSPICION.” There can be no reason, then, to apprehend his displeasure on account of the expression of sentiments, which are congenial with those of his own heart, and which are in perfect unison with the wise determination, that he has so nobly avowed. He possesses, moreover, too sound an understanding, and too manly a mind, not to discover and to feel, that it is

impossible to give him a stronger proof of attachment, than by humbly submitting to his consideration, and by earnestly recommending to his immediate adoption, the means, which are in his power, of providing for the security of that Throne, which is his lawful inheritance. A very little reflection will suffice to convince him, that there cannot be a more indubitable test of affection for his person, or of anxious solicitude for his honour and happiness, than the boldness of such representations; since they point out the path, in which alone he can find *true* glory, and by the pursuit of which he may shed a lustre, that no *military achievements* can bestow, on that character, which he has declared to be *more valuable to him than the Throne, and far dearer than even life itself.*

The present are no times for flattery. The nation stands in urgent need of all the aid, which can be afforded by Religion and Virtue—by good example and good morals. If we consider the astonishing events, the almost incredible changes, which have occurred within a few years; the present awful situation of the world; and, as far as we can penetrate into futurity, its still more awful prospects; the

moment seems to be fast approaching, in which *such aid* will alone be able to save us from utter destruction. Within a very short period, the whole face of society has undergone a most lamentable alteration. A new Power, founded upon the principle of universal revolution, and directing all its efforts to the overthrow of every Government, and the subjugation of every Country, has suddenly started up, and in an instant, as it were, has acquired a colossal stature. To describe the ravages of this Power, would be a task alike unnecessary and painful. Every eye has witnessed, every heart has shuddered at, the rapidity with which it has subverted Nation after Nation, until it has reduced the whole continent of Europe to such a state of abject vassalage, that the most powerful, and, erst, the most haughty Empires submit, with fear and trembling, to insults and injuries, which seem to announce their approaching downfall, rather than provoke its instant wrath by an assertion of their undoubted rights, or by a firm remonstrance against violated engagements*.

* What stronger proof of this can be afforded than the tame submission of Russia and Prussia, both of whom had expressly guaranteed the integrity of the German Empire, to the subjugation of Hanover, in direct violation of that integrity, and in open defiance of that guarantee?

At length Great Britain, which, “alone among the Nations,” has manfully withstood the “violent and unjust ambition” of this destructive power, remains alone to contend with its accumulated wrath, inflamed, by such resistance, to the utmost pitch of fury and desperation—and with its gigantic force, increased by the resources of all the Nations which it has subjected to its yoke, or which, without a formal subjection, it has rendered completely subservient to its will. The day of trial—so often foretold by those friends of social order, whose predictions were treated, like those of Cassandra, as causeless alarms—is at length arrived; and now must be decided the awful question, whether Great Britain can contend singly—not with France, of that there never was a doubt—but with that vast Revolutionary Power which, after rendering France more formidable, because more ambitious, more unprincipled, and more ferocious than ever, has subjected to its sway, or frightened by its frown, not only the whole European continent, but those vast regions in the other quarters of the globe, which are most intimately connected with the European Powers. The whole of the immense force, which France has been thus collecting into a focus,

by the aid of revolutionary means, is now devoted to the single object of effecting our destruction; and on the face of the earth there is not to be found a single power, which dares to take part with us. The first destination of this force seems to be, if possible, to overwhelm us at once; and the man who has the absolute direction of it, and who is far more enterprising than “Macedonia’s madman or the Swede,” shews himself determined to risk every thing for the chance of succeeding in the attempt. Considering the daring disposition which has impelled this man to undertake the most rash and desperate enterprises; considering his insatiable ambition, which sees no obstacle but this Country to his being the recognized Sovereign of the world; considering his implacable malice, which pants to revenge — with fire and sword, and with horrors which malice only like his, could inflict — the checks we have given to his triumphs, and the disgraces we have brought upon his arms; considering all this, it is scarcely doubtful that the attempt at invasion will sooner or later be made, with whatever hazard it may be attended. And when the circumstance of our being almost surrounded by hostile ports, is taken into the

account, it cannot be denied that such an attempt is, under such circumstances, inexpressibly more formidable than it has ever before been. But prepared as we are for the reception of the enemy, speedy invasion is very far from being the greatest danger we have to apprehend. The attempt at invasion may be postponed until, by the entire subjugation of the Continent, those Powers which are now termed neutral, may be so wedged into the Revolutionary machine, that, like Holland, they may be made active instruments for our destruction; or, upon an apparently more favourable supposition, invasion may be attempted and frustrated, nay its failure may bring ruin on the *individual*, who hopes to make it subservient to his ambition and revenge—but the power which, like his predecessors, he directs chiefly against us, may, in other hands, be no less formidable: and his overthrow may be only the signal to a more general convulsion. So thick is the gloom which envelopes the political world, that the most sanguine cannot catch a faint glimpse of that state of security, which alone can deserve the name of peace. If ever, during the existence of the revolu-

tionary power, it could be justifiable to entertain a hope of that inestimable blessing, there could not be a fairer opportunity to indulge such a hope, than when that power was concentrated in the hands of one man, who, by the terms of pacification, was left in the full sovereignty of territories, more than adequate, it might seem, to gratify the wildest dreams of ambition. But the disposition which was necessary to raise a man from nothing to such a situation, and, indeed, the nature of the situation itself so obtained, were not *compatible* with a state of repose; and a War, still more furious than the last, has succeeded to that momentary gleam of Peace, which was hailed as the harbinger of lasting and undisturbed tranquillity.

After such experience, who can look forward, with any distinct views, to a state of national quiet and safety? Who can devise the means by which the civilized world may be restored to security and independence? Amid such darkness and incertitude, it behoves the people of this Country to prepare their minds for severer trials, than they have hitherto undergone, for greater exertions, than are necessary to preserve them from the more imme-

diate danger of invasion. Without a change in the state of Europe, of which there is not at present the faintest prospect, there seems to be no other alternative for this Country than protracted warfare, or those hollow deceitful truces, which, by depriving us of that protection, which, as experience has fully proved, is, under such circumstances, to be found in War alone, would expose us to the treachery of a foe, no less *perfidious* than *implacable*. The obvious deductions of reason from principles, invariably received by every Statesman, during the course of many centuries;—the direful, but uniform experience of the last War, affording a strong, though unnecessary confirmation of those principles;—and, as if to preclude the possibility of a doubt, the result of an actual experiment of pacification; all these considerations unite in proclaiming a truth, which no one surely can now dispute, that, however difficult the task may be, *the reduction of the Power of France, within such bounds as may be compatible with the balance of Power, and the real independence of the rest of Europe, is an indispensable preliminary to our enjoyment of national safety—in time of Peace.*

Unless, therefore, it please Providence, to give a great and a sudden turn to public affairs, other virtues, besides those which are now admirably displayed by this Country, will be necessary to qualify us to encounter the vicissitudes and hardships, which, in all probability, we are destined to experience. If we would ultimately preserve our native land from slavery; if, looking beyond the dangers of the moment, we would secure that national independence, for which the British people, like one man, have rushed into the field to meet the insulting foe; if we would place our wives and children without the reach of horrors, the very contemplation of which freezes our blood, but against which our drawn swords are now their only protection; if, in short, we would bequeath to our descendants any other portion than the most degrading subjection and the bitter wretchedness; to that patriotic spirit, to that martial ardour, which will render the history of the present moment one of the most brilliant in the records of this Country, we must take care to superadd, and in an equal degree, the less splendid, but, at such a time, not less indispensable virtues of—pa-

tience, perseverance, and fortitude. We must not suffer ourselves to be wearied out by any length of contest ; we must not be disheartened by any failure of efforts ; we must not be induced, by any temporary or partial success, to relax in our efforts for permanent security, and, (what after so long an enjoyment of prosperity, may, perhaps, be more difficult than all the rest,) we must resolve cheerfully to submit to whatever privations so severe a struggle, for all that is dear to us, may render necessary. Rallying round the Throne, as the centre of union, and manifesting a respectful deference to those Prerogatives, without which it would be an empty pageant, although the exercise of them may not always accord with our own wishes, we must, while we exercise our undoubted right of free and temperate discussion on public affairs, stifle those party feelings, in which, by a most mischievous abuse of that privilege, we have been too much accustomed to indulge ; and which, notwithstanding the awfulness of our situation, still display themselves, on too many occasions, with undiminished violence and asperity. We must, in short, cultivate every virtue, public and

private, which can contribute to the union and strength of a State; we must subdue every passion which can tend to disturb our harmony, or to diminish our vigour, of mind or of body; we must obtain that firmness and self-command, which alone can enable us to encounter those difficulties, and to endure those disappointments, which it may possibly be our lot to suffer, before we can again enjoy the sweets of secure repose.

But the state above described, essential as it may be to our preservation, involves so great a change in our luxurious habits and undisciplined dispositions, that its attainment seems rather an object of romantic speculation, than of reasonable hope. Such a change, however, is happily practicable: and, it would, under Providence, enable us to withstand the shock to which we are exposed, and afford us a moral certainty, that we shall, at length, triumph over adversaries, who have no other bond of union than unjust ambition, and whose combination, founded upon injustice, can have no other cement than success. An earnest wish to promote so desirable, so indispensable a change, by pointing out the means, by which alone it

can be brought about, will, it is trusted, in conjunction with the reasons already assigned, be deemed to afford the author a sufficient apology, for again calling the attention of the public to that most interesting of all inquiries—*the state of their MORALS.*

St

of

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REFLECTIONS

ON THE

MORAL STATE OF SOCIETY, &c.

THE inexpressibly awful scenes which are now passing on the great theatre of society, derive much additional solemnity from the consideration, that they distinguish the approach of one of those grand divisions of time, by which the Christian world computes its progress from the commencement to the completion of its best hopes. It is for irrational beings to pass, without reflection, from day to day, and from year to year; but man, unless, by an unpardonable abuse of his high privileges, he reduce himself below the brute creation, will find times and seasons, at which to make a solemn pause; to review attentively his past course; to examine, seriously and fully, his present situation; and to prepare, with all the advantages which such a survey can afford, for his future progress through the arduous and intricate path of life. To ensure the recurrence of these salutary investigations, he will

consider certain periods as imposing upon him the duty of employing them in such a manner. The anniversary of his birth will remind him of the irretrievable loss of much inestimable time, and of many valuable opportunities; and it will suggest to him the necessity of improving, to a better purpose, the fleeting and uncertain remainder of his temporal existence. The commencement of a new year, according to general computation, in addition to those reflections which peculiarly regard himself will bring within his view the comprehensive concerns of society—the common, but most important interests of all, who are united by the dear and sacred connection of a common country; a connection which combines, in one great tie, all the bands that unite man to man, and which, by the guardian and unceasing superintendence of Government, protects, and can alone secure, the invaluable blessings of social intercourse, in its most endearing as well as in its most distant forms.

But a change of century is calculated to fill every considerate and feeling mind with emotions, which it is impossible adequately to describe. Such a change scarcely an individual in existence has before witnessed, and scarcely an individual now alive will again behold. Such a change brings together, in one point of view, objects so vast, that the concerns which ordinarily engage our most anxious solicitude, dwindle, upon comparison, into almost total insignificance. Contemplating the

lapse of centuries, the imagination views, at a single glance, the rise and fall of empires—the whirl, the violence, and ravages of Revolutions—the great and astonishing vicissitudes, which mankind experience in their Religious, moral, and political state; it beholds, at one view, the succession of ages; it surveys the still higher, though less regular arrangement of æras; and it measures the duration of the world with as much familiarity as the span of human life. But it does not stop here; it enters the obscure and boundless regions of space and eternity, and is compelled to confess that objects which, just before, had reduced to comparative nothingness the most interesting scenes of human existence, are themselves but as dust in the balance, in comparison with what is still beyond. Then rushes into the mind the idea of HIM, who is the Author, the Governor, the Sovereign Disposer of all. But totally lost in the immensity of such a conception, to the formation of which, the meridian genius of a Newton is scarcely more adequate than the dawning reason of a child, the soul is inspired with that humility, which is the fostering nurse of every virtue; with that reverence and devotion, which become a state of absolute dependence on the Great Creator; and with the liveliest gratitude for the hopes, which it has been authorized to form, of a future extension of its intelligence, which shall enable it to contemplate, with understanding and

delight, those sublime scenes that now infinitely exceed its powers of comprehension.

As the period of a new century has so powerful a tendency to excite the mind to reflection, it ought to be a season of great Religious and moral improvement. It might, indeed, be justly considered as a general calamity, if such a period were to pass unnoticed, except as a mere chronological occurrence. But never did a secular revolution call so loudly upon mankind to pause and reflect, as that which is now at hand. Never did a period of that denomination, or of any denomination, find the human race in such need of being roused and warned, as at this awful juncture. Never was the world in so perilous a state as at this moment. It is true, former ages have witnessed the fall of ancient and mighty empires. They have seen vast regions laid waste by the sword of ferocious conquerors, and nations, far remote from, and totally unknown to each other, reduced to one common yoke of debasing servitude. They have also beheld the ravaging fury of ruthless barbarians, who trampled upon the productions of art, extinguished the light of science, and replunged the world into the cheerless gloom of profound ignorance. But what was all this in comparison with the dangers which now threaten—with the ruin which now impends? We have to deplore a convulsion, which has already laid low ancient and mighty empires, and which exposes all empire to

subversion; but, what is infinitely worse, that convulsion has given birth to the fell monster Anarchy, who has already established his chaotic empire over one half of Europe, and who labours with, alas! a dreadful prospect of success, to involve the whole human race in universal contention and disorder. We see the most sanguinary conquerors, spreading desolation far and wide, and reducing the most populous and extensive regions under their despotic yoke. But what a yoke! Not one which merely excludes all hope of liberty, and which, while it enslaves, preserves.—No: *their* dominion is that of the vulture, who preys upon the vitals of every victim, in which he can once fix his merciless talons. Nor do they exhaust their rage upon the physical existence of man; they endeavour to extirpate from his breast every Religious and moral principle, and to deprive him of the consolations of virtue, and of the hope of Heaven. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that these fiends in human shape do not declare war against the arts and sciences; on the contrary, they strain every faculty of the human mind to its greatest degree of practicable exertion; they explore, with indefatigable research, all the secrets of nature, and carry every invention of ingenuity, and every refinement of civilization, to the utmost pitch of improvement. But these attainments serve only to render them a more grievous scourge to humanity. The cultivation of their talents, the extent of their knowledge, their

advancements in science, only enable them the better to pursue their projects of destruction, more effectually to attack Religion, government, and social order, and to establish more firmly their horrid sway of impiety and vice. If the rude tribes, whom we have been accustomed to denominate barbarians, had, in their state of uncorrupted simplicity, been destitute of those ruder virtues, the want of which is justly lamented in the most polished society—if they had been distinguished only by that fierce and ferocious resentment of injuries, which rendered them so dreadful to their enemies—still their undisguised and unappeasable vengeance would have been as much less terrible, than the refined malice of the philosophical and revolutionary barbarians of France, as it is less horrid to be delivered over at once to a violent death, than to be subjected to every torture which ingenuity can invent, and to be cruelly kept alive, by the skill of surgery, and the art of medicine, in order to be reserved for an endless repetition of torments.

But language is unable to afford an adequate description of the fell monsters, who have already proved the greatest curse which mankind has ever experienced, and still less of the tremendous consequences, which would inevitably attend the complete success of their diabolical plans. On these subjects exaggeration is, for the first time, impossible; and the most literal description is sure to be the most strong and impressive. The spontaneous feelings of every

individual must suggest to him, that the present actual situation of Europe is precisely that of a large community, divided into a great number of families, in one of the most numerous and powerful of which, some desperately wicked servants have risen against their Lord—a most kind and affectionate master; murdered him and his wife, with his nearest relatives and best friends; taken possession of his inheritance; and openly invited, with a promise of their fraternity and assistance, the servants of all other families to follow their example. Not content, however, with this, they have sallied out with force and arms, seized upon many neighbouring estates, and driven the lawful proprietors into exile. And when, by this accumulation of guilt, they have rendered themselves so formidable as to defy all law, and to defeat all opposition, they call upon every proprietor who has succeeded in hitherto preserving his possessions, to sanction their robberies, to guarantee their unjust acquisitions, to accord them indemnity for their crimes, and to leave them in full possession of a degree of force, which may enable them, at leisure, to proceed in their career of depredation, until whatever remains of right, order and authority, shall be buried under one common heap of anarchy and ruin.

The subject, however, forces itself upon the reflecting mind in another and a still more awful light. The distressful situation, and the truly alarming prospects, of the social world, must not be considered

as the mere result of political causes. Such causes would have been totally inadequate to the production of such effects, if they had not found society in a state of dreadful depravation, with regard to Religion and morals. This is the principal source of the great and tremendous evils, with which we are now visited. And it is the more necessary to remount to that source, because it is there alone, that any effectual remedy can be applied. The present age has been distinguished by the most deep, daring, and extensive conspiracy against the Majesty of Heaven, which has ever been conceived by the human heart. A sect of Infidels, who, to the honour of all past times, are known by the epithet *modern*, have openly proclaimed War "against the Throne and Monarchy of God." The founders and partisans of this sect have, for upwards of half a century, been straining their faculties, in order to eradicate all sense of Religion from the mind of man; and to accomplish their infernal purpose they have pursued a mode, at once the most impious, and the most artful, that could be conceived. The existence of a Deity is so obvious a deduction of reason from the works of creation, that a direct attempt to propagate atheism, as a system, must defeat itself by its own absurdity. But the end which is unattainable by direct, may be accomplished by circuitous means. Therefore these impious men directed their attacks against *revealed* Religion, the truth of which, instead of being absolutely demon-

strable by reason, depends upon a more remote, though, when complete, as it is in the present instance, an equally convincing species of proof—historical testimony. They knew that if they could banish from Christendom the particular form, in which Religion had been there inculcated, and in which, alone, it had obtained belief and excited veneration, they would, in effect, destroy its substance, and leave the mind a total void of dark and hopeless Atheism. They also felt and indulged a peculiar and implacable animosity against the Christian Religion *, on account of its immaculate purity, which, though admirably calculated to promote the happiness of man in this life, was at direct variance with the vices, in the indulgence of which they had determined that their happiness should consist; and they were fully aware that the same corrupt propensities by which they were enslaved, would facilitate their success in endeavouring to weaken a restraint, so unwelcome to a very large portion of mankind. With these views and advantages they set themselves to work; and having a perfect knowledge of the nature of man, except, indeed, as an immortal being, and of the machine of society—

* The founder of this infernal sect, or rather the framer of this Infidel Conspiracy, Voltaire, displayed, in a most horrid manner, his rage against Christianity, by the frequent use of the most blasphemous expression—*écrasez l'infame*—which, shocking to relate, he dared to apply to the Author of our Holy Religion!

having also a most extensive acquaintance with the channels, by which literature afforded an access to the human mind—they laboured, with indefatigable industry, but, for a great number of years, with concealed efforts*, not only to make proselytes to their system, and to establish secret societies of infidels, but to destroy, by subtle and sceptical disquisitions, and particularly by the most powerful of all weapons, raillery and ridicule, all sense of Religion in mankind.

In the mean time, some of the disciples of this sect, in furtherance of their original plan, framed and propagated an entire new system of morals, to which has been given the name of modern philosophy. A philosophy which attacks the foundations, while the infidel scheme aims it blows at the main pillar of civil society; a philosophy which tends to extinguish all the feelings of nature, by teaching its votaries to sacrifice their first, their strongest affections, at the distant shrine of general humanity; a philosophy which holds up gratitude to contempt, and teaches to despise the sacred impulses of paternal love and filial piety; a philosophy which exposes to scorn every ancient usage, every established institution, every local attachment, and which would sacrifice, in one rash moment, all the fruits of the collective wisdom of past ages; a philosophy which undermines the very foundations of

* It was the deep maxim of Voltaire, "Strike, but conceal the hand."

virtue by making vice appear amiable, by embellishing guilt with attractive qualities, by rendering it an object of pity and of love, and by so adorning even those crimes which strike at the very existence of society, as to make them not only to lose their deformity, but to call forth the tenderest sympathies of mankind; a philosophy which inculcates to every individual, that his own casual and capricious notions of right and wrong are to supersede those ancient rules, which are taught by divine wisdom, or established on the basis of human experience, and which have hitherto been regarded with reverence, and considered as the tests and the bulwarks of morality; a philosophy which maintains the most criminal and destructive actions to be justifiable, provided their perpetrator have so depraved a judgment, and so vitiated a heart, as *sincerely* to think them meritorious*.

Can Hell's vast magazine of mischief contain a

* The fallacy and the baneful tendency of this scheme of philosophy, have been most ably exposed in a course of lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations, lately delivered, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, by a gentleman, who, having changed his original views of the French revolution, has not only had the manliness openly to avow that change, but has also laboured with great industry, and, there is reason to hope, with much success, to counteract the pernicious principles on which that Revolution is founded. The publication of the above lectures is much to be desired by every friend to social order, as well as by every admirer of sound learning, profound research, and of eloquent illustration.

more potent engine of destruction than this horrid system, which tends to effect a complete subversion of every existing establishment—a total Revolution in the political and moral world ?

The Revolutionary system thus introduced by the modern Infidel Philosophers, is at open war with that which has hitherto prevailed in Civil Society. So diametrically opposite, indeed, are these systems, that light and darkness, good and evil, do not exhibit a greater contrast. The latter, which is properly termed the *social* system, is founded upon Religion, morality, and law. Its tendency is to restrain the passions and controul the vices of mankind, and to counteract the evil propensities of human nature. It endeavours to regulate the conduct of individuals by the rules of virtue. It prescribes to states, in their mutual intercourse, the observance of equity, good faith, and moderation. Its objects, in short, are order, justice, peace, security, and the preservation of all the blessings, which constitute the happiness of human life. On the other hand, the *Revolutionary* system tends to the subversion of Religion, morality and law, the ancient foundations of society. Instead of correcting or controuling, it gives a full scope to human depravity. It releases the passions from all restraint, and encourages both individuals and states to disregard every rule, which has been wont to keep them within the bounds of rectitude or moderation. It is incorporated with a new scheme of morals, of which the tendency is to corrupt the heart, and to dry up the

very sources of virtue. Its object, in short, is to dissolve the bands of society, and to introduce discord, oppression, licentiousness and anarchy.

It is true, the *social* system cannot prevent the commission of great crimes—it cannot entirely restrain, either individuals or states, from acting injuriously and flagitiously. While man is an imperfect being, subject to passion, and exposed to temptation, he will, at times, be a disgrace to his species, and a just object of divine and human vengeance. But this system, though it cannot render him perfect, has hitherto confined his *depravity* within such bounds, as are essential, not merely to the existence, but to the general well-being of society. It operates as a never-ceasing, though an imperfect check upon, human wickedness. It places Religious awe, Moral feeling, in legal sanction, aided by their powerful coadjutors, custom, opinion, and disgrace, in short, the whole force of the social machine, in opposition to the violence of temptation and the influence of corruption. Every crime is an infringement of its rules. It is difficult to conceive an act, injurious either to a community or an individual, which is not a violation of its principles. Under such a system abandoned characters meet, on all sides, with obstacles to the gratification of their depraved propensities; and although it cannot entirely suppress fraud, perfidy, ambition and injustice, it takes precautions to guard against their effects, and to check the evils, which cannot be entirely prevented.

In proportion to the strength of this system, and to the influence of the principles on which it is founded, virtue and happiness must prevail in the world; and it is from the decay of its authority, and the neglect of its rules, that flow those disorders, which embitter human life, and disturb the general tranquillity. In short, whatever is excellent in society, proceeds from the Religious and civil establishments, which are of the essence of this system; whatever is depraved, from the defective influence of those establishments. But the perversity of modern philosophers has inverted this tenet—by ascribing all that is bad to the influence of the establishments themselves.

If the monsters of the French revolution had been under the controul of such a system, they could never have exhibited such shocking spectacles of unexampled depravity. They would, doubtless, have been pests to society; but they would have been destitute of those means of boundless mischief, by which they have been enabled infinitely to surpass all the monsters of former times. Buonaparte himself might perhaps have passed as an ordinary villain; or if, impelled by the matchless atrocity of his disposition, he had exceeded the usual bounds of wickedness, still he would have wanted an opportunity of shewing what dreadful and astonishing lengths of iniquity human nature can go, when released from those restraints, legal, moral and Religious, to which, in every preceding period of the world, mankind have, more or less, been subject.

The revolutionary system, on the contrary, is a nursery of vice, a hot bed of corruption. The foulest and most destructive crimes grow out of its principles, and are in conformity with its rules. It dissolves every restraint upon human wickedness. It presents every temptation to human infirmity. It makes crime the only path to success, the only road to exaltation. Its means of attaining power are tumult, sedition, treason, rebellion and regicide. Its means of preserving authority are oppression, tyranny, confiscation, judicial murder, war, and universal excitement to revolt. It calls into action whatever is corrupt or evil-disposed in society. By perfidious but specious promises of liberty and happiness, it unsettles the minds of men, it disturbs their feelings and their habits, and it seduces their affections from institutions which they have been accustomed to love and revere. It diffuses a spirit of licentiousness, it poisons the fountains of virtue, it withdraws from passion its most powerful restraint, the prospect of a future state, and by thus corrupting the morals of mankind, it renders them an easy prey to its seductive arts. It gives a new, an indelible taint to the human heart, and a deeper dye to every species of guilt. It renders disaffection more extensive, faction more desperate, sedition more active, conspiracy more daring, treason more malignant, and impiety more blasphemous.

But can it be true that systems, which in *principle* exhibit so great a contrast, resemble each other

in *practice* ? Can the waters which flow from such different fountains be similar in quality ? This would be strange, indeed ! It would be contrary to the whole course of nature. It would, in effect, totally confound virtue and vice, and reduce the difference between them to a mere name. Such, however, is the paradox which the advocates of the new system would persuade us to admit. Obligated, at length, to give up the purity and perfectibility of this system, and to acknowledge that, in spite of all their predictions in its favour, it has not only failed to produce any improvement in the state of society, but has equalled, in depravity, whatever has gone before it, they now, as their last resource, and in the hope of still prevailing on mankind to believe that its destruction would not be productive of any advantage, contend that it has only imitated the example of former times ; that it has displayed nothing new in wickedness ; and that it has been guilty of no atrocity, which is not to be matched in the records of history.

If this statement were true—if the deeds of republican France did not exceed all example of iniquity—still the mode of reasoning here resorted to would be fallacious in the extreme. That the history of the world abounds with crime, that the perusal of that history often fills the soul with horror, it is impossible to deny. Nay, at the moment of such perusal the reader is apt, sometimes, to exclaim—can any thing worse have

been effected by the French Revolution ! But the crimes, which so justly excite the utmost indignation, form only a part, though a very conspicuous one, of the picture which history presents to view. That picture has its lights, as well as its shades ; it has its bright and cheering parts, as well as those which are disgustful and shocking ; it exhibits not only the horrors of war, but the blessings of peace ; it displays the most splendid virtues, as well as the most atrocious vices ; while it holds forth some characters which excite detestation, it preserves the memory of others which inspire love, and command admiration ; it will perpetuate the names of an Antonⁿius Pius, and of a George the Third, as well as those of a Nero and a Caligula. How different the picture of republican France ! *There* nothing meets the eye but one uniform, unmixed scene of wickedness and crime ; no light—but only “ darkness visible ;” no interval of peace ; no pause from the furious rage of desolating war ; no virtue to relieve the horrid mass of impiety and vice ; not a single action which can produce any sentiment but loathing ; not a single character, amid the vast Revolutionary group, which can excite any feeling but abhorrence.

It should also be remembered that, while history records, for the instruction of mankind, the crimes of those who have been most conspicuous on the great theatre of the world, while it informs us of

transactions, the recital of which makes us shudder, it necessarily casts a veil over the private condition of social life, the contemplation of which would relieve and even gratify the mind. It can do little more than preserve the memory of publick characters and events, and give a general notion of the state and progress of society. But it is, nevertheless, indisputably certain, that while the political world has been convulsed with storm, and deformed with crime, it has often been the felicity of domestick life to enjoy undisturbed serenity. While the throne has exhibited a spectacle of vice and infamy, the people, though essentially injured by such an example, have, for the time, been blessed with quiet, order, and security; every man has sitten under his vine, or under his fig-tree; private repose has been undisturbed, and public prosperity has been progressive. Even those great and tremendous convulsions, which seemed to shake the edifice of society, have been partial and temporary in their operation. Their ravages, like those of the raging elements, have been local; and, however dreadful for the moment, have been soon repaired when the storm came to subside.

On the contrary, the revolutionary system extends its ravages over the whole face of Society. Wherever its influence has prevailed, no rank, no condition, no retirement, has been able to elude its fury. It has violated every right; it has invaded

every comfort ; it has filled every honest and feeling heart with anguish. In France, where it first established its dominion, it soon made the whole land one scene of carnage, devastation, and ruin. In every other country, to which it has extended its sway, it has not only heaped injuries, and brought destruction, upon all who possessed any kind of authority, but it has treated even the lowest classes with such ferocious and insulting barbarity, that they have displayed, wherever they have had an opportunity, a more determined spirit of resistance, and a more eager thirst for revenge, than the higher orders. In one word, this system exhibits the extraordinary and shocking spectacle of a desperate combination of men, invested, by the above means, with the powers of government, and exercising those powers for the destruction of all other governments ; attacking the very foundations of all legitimate authority ; and endeavouring to overturn the ancient edifice of society, in order to erect, upon its ruins, a far more extensive and oppressive despotism, than has ever yet existed upon the face of the earth.

The first principles of this revolutionary system—modern infidelity and modern philosophy—have for many years been corrupting the heart of Europe, and thence diffusing their poison to every part of the civilized world. Unfortunately, they found society in a state extremely favour-

able to their operation. The European establishments in the Eastern and Western worlds, by opening new and most copious sources of wealth and prosperity, had contributed, in conjunction with the discovery of the art of printing, to produce a great and a sudden revolution in the minds and manners of civilized nations. The treasures which, by means of those establishments, were poured into Europe, by giving a new stimulus to industry, obtained a speedy and general circulation, and all classes were thereby enabled to enlarge their sphere of gratification. Desire encreased with enjoyment, and mankind no longer confined their wishes, as formerly, to a mode of life suitable to their condition. The upper ranks began to descend from their dignified, and, comparatively, cheap magnificence, that they might, with less restraint, participate in voluptuous indulgences. They quitted their rural sports, and even their festive board, for the more expensive and the enervating pleasures of a capital. The ancient and venerable family Mansion was, at length, deserted, even at the season when it was wont to be the seat of hospitality, and to diffuse, to all around, a cheering warmth amid the rigours of winter: and the once dignified owner, who had shone as a star of the first magnitude in his natural sphere, was lost in the confused galaxy of a dissipated metropolis. The middle classes turned their minds from the attainment of competence to the acquisition of wealth.

They began to consider the possession of great abundance, as essential to happiness. Their covetousness was excited by a view of the numerous avenues to opulence, which opened on every side, and it was inflamed by the instances of great accumulation which occurred among their equals. They did not, however, seek to acquire that they might *accumulate*, but that they might *enjoy*. They employed their riches as means of gratification. Their thirst of gain *, and their love of pleasure, acted and re-acted upon each other. In every indulgence, and even in ostentation, they vied with their superiors : and the principle of respect, *that* necessary bulwark of social order, became weakened in a most alarming degree. Even the lower orders experienced the effect of the general change. Their labour procured them a more comfortable subsistence, and they both experienced wants, and enjoyed luxuries, to which, till then, they had been utter strangers. They also began to entertain notions of independence, alike injurious to themselves and to society at large. These causes have continued to operate, without interruption, for a long space of time, but, within the compass of a few years, in a greatly

* To provide the means of luxury, traders, of every description, were induced to seek for exorbitant profits; and many who dealt in the necessities of life have not scrupled, in times of scarcity, to sacrifice, to sordid avarice, all feeling for private distress and for publick safety.

accelerated ratio. Every person, who has attained even a middle age, can testify how much habits of luxury, dissipation, and, their natural consequence, a spirit of insubordination, have increased, within the period of his recollection; until, at length, they are become the distinguishing characteristics of the age, and their dominion seems to be fully established in the human breast. The destructive effects of luxury, which, while it is generally produced by riches, increases in its turn a desire for gain, have been the frequent theme of moralists; and their descriptions of its baneful consequences finds ample confirmation in the page of history, which represents this overwhelming, though often imperceptible tide, as having, in the course of time, spread its ravages over the whole face of the globe; swallowed up the most powerful monarchies, and the most extensive empires; and carried desolation where the sword had not been able to penetrate, or where its fury had been appeased. Long before commerce had poured forth those copious streams of wealth, which have swoln this tide to its present most alarming extent, it was truly said,

Sæviôr armis,
Luxuria incubuit, victumq; ulciscitur orbem.

It is not, however, necessary to dwell on descriptions which the experience of all ages so amply confirms. Suffice it to say, that luxury is an in-

exhaustible source of private misery and public disorder; that it is the most dangerous foe to human happiness, because it is the most injurious enemy to virtue, without which, by the ordinance of Heaven, happiness is not to be enjoyed. Its effect is to excite insatiable desires, which being incapable of gratification, produce disappointment, and end in total dissatisfaction and disgust. Every thing is then seen through a false medium; nothing is estimated according to its real value; and the mind is incessantly disturbed by a restless desire of change. The soul, instead of enjoying that undisturbed serenity, that calm sunshine, in which true happiness consists, is constantly vexed by "troublesome storms." Every social affection, every patriotic feeling is overwhelmed by inordinate and boundless craving; and, at length, the worst possible state is produced—the state of selfishness; which is, in effect, the utter extinction of man as a social being; which bursts all the ties by which he is united, in various relations, to the rest of the world; and which brings on the dissolution of expiring virtue*.

If luxury in itself be so pernicious and destructive,

* No two things can possess a greater antipathy to each other than selfishness and virtue. According to the Constitution of our nature, virtuous sentiments are originally formed by means of the social affections. For a sense that virtue is necessary to the general happiness of mankind, and that vice must be productive of general misery, is the main source of a love of virtue and of a

what must be its effects, when favoured by an extraordinary relaxation of Religious and moral principles? Nothing but the vigorous and salutary influence of those principles can, in any degree, check its progress. What ravages then must it produce, when, instead of being effectually resisted by such checks, it finds them removed out of its way, or, at least, dreadfully enfeebled by the operation of other causes, besides its own increasing ascendancy!—When it is aided by regularly digested and widely diffused systems, which tend to eradicate Religion and morality from the heart of man?—When it is assisted by such auxiliaries as that modern philosophy, which tends entirely to destroy the social affections, the germ of virtuous principles; and that modern infidelity which has succeeded so far, as to produce in one of the populous states of Europe a formal and national profession of atheism *, and to efface

hatred of vice. But an indifference to the happiness of others must render us indifferent to the means of their happiness. Therefore, without the social affections, virtuous sentiments could not possibly be formed; and by the extinction of those affections, which is the natural effect, and, indeed, the very definition of selfishness, virtue must be eradicated from the mind. Their total extinction, as a general case, is beyond the limits of experience, and, we may hope, of possibility. But in proportion as they are enfeebled, the dominion of virtue must be diminished, and that of vice confirmed.

* It ought not to be forgotten that such a profession has been made by a neighbouring nation. The following sketch of the progress of that nation towards atheism, (which the author has met with in a miscellaneous work,) may be found not undeserving of notice.

from the minds of multitudes, in all classes, throughout Christendom, the belief of a Deity, and of a

They began with attacking the property of the clergy, whom they gradually stripped of all their possessions.—They prohibited the ecclesiastical dress (April 2, 1790).—They exacted from the priests an oath to maintain all the Decrees of the assembly (Nov. 20, 1790); persecuted those who refused that oath, and practised the grossest indecencies on women who attended the ministration of such conscientious priests.—In 1791 they greatly diminished the number of churches.—In 1792 they decreed the transportation of the Priests whose conscience would not suffer them to take the oaths.—In 1793 they abolished one Sunday in a month.—They forbade that the shops should be shut on a Sunday.—They afterwards changed the calendar, established *decades*, and got rid of the Sunday altogether.—They decreed that every church-yard should exhibit the inscription, “Death is eternal sleep.” They encouraged, invited, and entered publicly in a register, the apostasy of Priests, and *rewarded it with a pension*.—They applauded the Declaration of the *Commune de Séve*, that “men should be no longer the victims of an imaginary God.”—One of the sections of Paris declared, in the Assembly, that “they would no longer have Altars, or Priests, or other God than Nature;”—and the Assembly thereupon decreed, that the people of Paris had merited well of their country.—At length one of the Convention, at a sitting of that body, not only made a public profession of atheism, but openly declared that he gloried in being an atheist.

Although modern infidelity has made France its principal abode, it has extended itself to every country in Europe. Nay, the following extract from a valuable pamphlet, which was lately published on the other side of the Atlantic, proves that America, though comparatively a young country, with a scanty population, has experienced this dreadful curse in a most alarm-

state of future retribution:—a belief which, in all ages, has been considered as the main pillar of society, and which is the only effectual restraint upon vice!

Thus it appears that three powerful causes of corruption, either of which would, singly, be more than sufficient to make the moral and social world one scene of ruin, have been long co-operating, with combined force, and with incessant re-action. Their respective effects have, however, been various in different countries. Germany has been the principal school of the new philosophy, and its *literati* have laboured indefatigably to deluge Europe with works of all descriptions, and chiefly with plays and

ing degree. “Add to this consideration, that infidelity has
 “awfully increased. The time was, and *that* within your own
 “recollection, when the term infidelity was almost a stranger
 “to our ears, and an open infidel an object of abhorrence.
 “But now the term has become familiar, and infidels hardly
 “disgust. Our youth, our hope and our pride, are poisoned
 “with the accursed leaven. The vain title of “Philosophy”
 “has turned their giddy heads, and, what is worse, has cor-
 “rupted their untutored hearts. It is now a mark of sense, the
 “proof of an enlarged and liberal mind, to scoff at all the
 “truths of inspiration, and to cover with ridicule the hope of
 “a Christian; those truths and that hope, which are the richest
 “boon of divine benignity, which calm the perturbed consci-
 “ence; and heal the wounded spirit; which sweeten every
 “comfort, and sooth every sorrow; which give strong conso-
 “lation in the arrest of death, and shed the light of immortality
 “over the gloom of the grave; all are become the sneer of
 “the buffoon, and the song of the drunkard.”—“The Voice of
 “Warning to Christians, &c.” Printed at New York.

novels, which most artfully inculcate this baneful system*. In France, luxury and infidelity have established a joint dominion, and have not only reduced the people of that country to a state of degradation, depravity, and misery, of which no example is to be found in history, but have rendered them the scourge of the whole earth. The British nation, favoured by their "quiet good sense," by their natural sobriety of character, by their detached situation, and by their Religious and moral habits, have been less injured by the impious and disorganizing schemes of modern infidels, than their continental neighbours: but their unrivalled prosperity has exposed them, in a most dreadful degree, to the moral ravages of luxury; while the new philosophy has not only made a considerable progress among them, but has even reached the sources, from which the principles of the rising generation must be derived. Associations have been formed for the promotion of scepticism and atheism; public harangues, under the pretence of discussion, have been delivered, for the same purpose, in the heart of their metropolis; and the press has been employed to circulate the poison in the humblest walks of life, and to corrupt the mind of the peasant and the artisan.

Still, however, this favoured country, happily

* The author has been assured, on very respectable authority, that nearly 10,000 writers are supposed to be thus employed in Germany.

possesses more Religion and virtue than can be found throughout the rest of Christendom. It is in this respect the very reverse of France, the most corrupt of all modern nations; and the Supreme Being seems to have preserved, with the most striking justice, a difference between the fate of the two countries; which remarkably corresponds with their respective merits. The one appears, according to the usual course of Providence, to have been selected as the scourge of those which are less wicked than itself; while the other has been the guardian of the social world, to save it, perhaps, from total destruction.

But although the great causes of human depravity have had a very different operation in different countries, their effect is every where visible, in a most dreadful corruption of principle and degeneracy of practice; in an extreme licentiousness of manners; in a prodigious and still progressive increase of the most pernicious vices, and particularly of that most pernicious and destructive of all vices — adultery: a vice hostile to an institution which is the parent of every other institution, the source of every social affection, and which is raised to the highest degree of sanctity, and guarded with the most distinguished care, from even the remotest danger of violation, by that Holy Religion, which teaches mankind the way both to present and future happiness. It cannot excite surprise that the decay of this Religion should be accompanied with a

proportional increase of a vice, which it is so studious to prevent. But when it is also considered, that the modern enemies of that Religion, that the infidels and philosophers (as they call themselves) of the day, have, with an infernal depth of policy, employed their main effort to render the marriage tie contemptible in the eyes of mankind *; and when it is further considered, that the dissipated habits of life which have obtained, in a most extraordinary degree, are peculiarly fraught with temptations to a criminal indulgence of the passions—which is in fact their great recommendation to the votaries of unlawful pleasure;—when these considerations are taken into the account, it would only appear surprising if the vice of adultery had not increased to a most alarming extent.

The most unerring test of the morals of society, at any given period, is the degree of respect which is paid to the nuptial engagement. In proportion as that engagement is viewed with reverence, and observed with fidelity, an age may, with certainty, be denominated virtuous. But it is impossible to find a more apt description of a corrupt, vicious, and profligate age, than to say that it is distinguished by a disregard for the marriage vows. Such a description was once applied, for such a pur-

* One of these *Philosophers* in this Country, felt it due to his principles to apologize for having entered into the marriage state, which he had before termed an “odious monopoly!”

pose, by unerring wisdom, to a corrupt and hardened people, who were denominated, "a sinful and adulterous generation."

In a Religious point of view the times are distinguished, not only by a most dangerous and extensive apostacy from a Religion, which is the sole preservative of the civilized world from Atheism, and which is inseparably interwoven with all the civil institutions of Christendom; but also by an alarming lukewarmness in those, who still profess that Holy Religion. *That* apostacy, however favoured by the system of modern infidelity, could not have prevailed to such an extent, without *this* lukewarmness. It is next to impossible, either in a community or an individual, for a Religion so calculated, as Christianity, to warm as well as to purify the heart, to be exchanged for infidelity, without first degenerating into a cold, formal, and nominal profession *."

* So long ago as the year 1776, the Rev. Mr. Jones of Nayland, a most intelligent and accurate observer of the signs of the times, published the following reflections on the growth of Heathenism among modern Christians:—"The Reader may be shocked when he is told that there is a disposition to Heathenism in our age of so much improvement, and pronounce the accusation improbable and visionary; but he is requested to weigh, impartially, the facts here offered, and then to form his judgment." In pointing out the tokens of this Pagan infection. "Where at last," (says he) "will this taste for Heathen learning, which hath been prevailing and increasing for so many years, from the

But there is one circumstance still to be noticed, which distinguishes the present state of Society, and which is, perhaps, the most alarming symptom of this awful crisis. The causes which have been long operating so banefully on manners and morals, have essentially injured the constitution of the human mind. The disease has not only contaminated the mental system, but it has weakened, and almost overpowered those energies, which could alone struggle with

“ days of Lord Herbert to the present time—whither can it lead
 “ us but to indifference and atheism? A Christian corrupted
 “ with Heathen affections degenerates into something worse
 “ than the original Heathens of antiquity :”—And as if he had
 his before eyes (in 1776) that “beginning of sorrows,” the
 French Revolution and Apostacy, the introduction of the old
 abominable Pagan idolatry, and the revival of Pagan rites in
 the dedication of Altars to Liberty and Reason, he observes,
 “ Should any person ask me how Christianity is to be banished
 “ out of Christendom, as the predictions of the Gospel give us
 “ reason to expect it will, I should make no scruple to answer,
 “ that it will certainly be brought to pass by this growing af-
 “ fection to Heathenism : therefore it is devoutly to be wished,
 “ that some Censor would arise, with the zeal and spirit of
 “ Martin Luther, to remonstrate effectually against this indul-
 “ gence of Paganism, which is more fatal to the interests of
 “ Christianity, than all the abuses purged away at the Refor-
 “ mation. This is now the grand abuse, against which the
 “ zeal of a *Luther*, and the wit of an *Erasmus*, ought to be di-
 “ rected : it is the abomination of desolation, standing where
 “ it ought not, even in the Sanctuary of Christianity, and is a
 “ worse offence than all the profanations that ever happened
 “ to the Jewish nation.” See “Reflections on the Growth of
 “ Heathenism among Modern Christians.” *Jones’s Works*,
 Vol. III. p. 423.

it; which could alone afford a hope that it might ultimately be vanquished.

The moral sense has been enfeebled to a degree, which seems to threaten its total extinction. Conscience has not only lost its power to restrain men from the commission of crimes themselves, but it even ceases to excite their indignation against the crimes of others. That moral anger, the fear of which, though incapable of preventing human wickedness, has always hitherto kept it within some bounds, has ceased to exist, and crimes, which, in any former period, would not have been tolerated, are now beheld without horror by the generality of mankind, and even meet with advocates in persons, who lay claim to Religious and virtuous characters. That shocking Conspiracy against Religion, order, and government, the French revolution, distinguished as it has been by atrocities which surpass all example of human turpitude, has been viewed with apparent indifference, even in this country, not merely by men whose lives exhibit one uniform series of vice and profligacy, (that were not so strange,) but by some who profess to live in the regular performance of all their duties to God and man. To what is this wonderful inconsistency to be attributed? Certainly not to any disposition to favour so detestable a cause, but to a defect in that moral feeling, which, if it existed in any considerable degree, would render them incapable of suppressing their horror at such crimes and at such

criminals. Their moral disapprobation is too weak to be roused even by deeds, the blackness of which has never been equalled, and the faithful description of which will appear, to posterity, a most gross and injurious libel on human nature. This astonishing insensibility to crime, by producing in the vicious a consciousness of security against the indignation of mankind, relieves vice of its last restraint, a sense of shame. The most abandoned characters, if they were sure to excite abhorrence, would shun the face of day; but *now*, confident of being received, at least with indifference, they stalk abroad and glory in their shame. Odious as hypocrisy undoubtedly is, it is a recognition of the supremacy of conscience; it has been justly and beautifully described as a homage paid by Vice to Virtue; but when guilt lays aside this mask, the proof of human degeneracy can be carried no farther.

In the foregoing observations, the moral sense is considered as a faculty really subsisting in the constitution of human nature. But in so considering this important quality, it is necessary to guard against the pernicious system which represents that sense, or, as it is usually termed, conscience, however it may be formed, as the supreme and infallible judge of right and wrong. Such a system, which is the corner stone of the New Philosophy, tends to confound all distinction between virtue and vice, and to supersede all rules, by leading to the persuasion that nothing more is necessary to render actions virtuous,

than their being approved by the conscience of the agent. If this system were true, the worst of crimes would lose their turpitude, provided their perpetrator had so perverted a mind as to think them justifiable ;—a circumstance, which, in reality, must greatly enhance their guilt and their mischief. So pernicious, indeed, is this system, that mankind cannot be too much on their guard against a disposition, which has long been too prevalent, to consider virtue as consisting, rather in an obedience to the dictates of conscience, whatever those dictates may be, than in an adherence to sound principle. But in guarding against the dangerous hypothesis which erects the moral sense into an infallible monitor, it is not necessary to suppose *that* sense to be merely an exercise of the reason or judgment, on the moral rectitude or turpitude of conduct. It is true, reason passes sentence upon actions, and pronounces them to be right or wrong ; but the moral sense implies something more ; it supposes a feeling of approbation or disapprobation—and, consequently, of pleasure or pain. Now it is obvious, that judging and feeling are two very different operations of the mind. The truth in this, as in most cases, seems to lie between the extremes, which, in controversy, have been severally maintained. We possess an instinctive faculty, called the moral sense, which renders the contemplation of actions agreeable or disagreeable, as they agree or disagree with our notions of propriety. It is of the greatest im-

portance that this faculty, which is perfectly distinct in its nature from reason, should be strong and vigorous, for it furnishes the impulse which prompts to virtue, or deters from vice. The moral sense should therefore be cherished and cultivated with the utmost care. It is the active principle of virtue, and the want of it denotes the grossest depravity. To be under the guidance of conscience—to be feelingly alive to its reproaches—to be miserable without its approbation—all this is undoubtedly essential to a virtuous character. But it is by no means sufficient to constitute such a character. Conscience must be rightly informed. It must be associated with good dispositions and habits. It must be directed by virtuous rules. It must be regulated by sound principles. Happily we possess an infallible standard, by which, to regulate our conscience on all occasions. In the oracles of eternal truth, such a standard is to be found; and we have the authority of Omniscience itself to convince us, that while we adhere to that standard, we must act virtuously, and that we cannot, in the smallest instance, deviate from it, without being guilty of vice. The present age is, however, remarkably deficient in both these essentials of a virtuous character. For, on the one hand, the moral sense is decayed, and the force of conscience enfeebled; and, on the other, such a laxity of principle prevails, that conscience claims to be released from all rules,

and, however perverted, assumes to be the sole judge of virtue.

In the room, however, of that moral sense, that salutary indignation against vice, which constitutes the grand bulwark of virtue, the present age has substituted other qualities, which, by casting a mantle over guilt, seem intended to afford some apology for the indulgence with which it is treated. These qualities have assumed the specious names of Candour, Liberality and Moderation. But what a vile counterfeit do they display of those amiable principles of feeling and judging, to which such appellations really belong. Instead of disposing us to make due allowances for the imperfections of human nature; to pass a favourable judgement on actions, whenever they can bear a favourable construction; to allow every man credit for good motives, when there are not sufficient grounds to suppose him actuated by such as are bad; and, in case of actual delinquency, to exercise lenity, whenever, without injury to the public interest, it may reasonably be expected to promote reformation;—instead of operating in such a manner, *modern* Candour, Liberality and Moderation, consist in a sacrifice of all principle; in a disposition to regard undoubted guilt with complacency, nay, even to consider it as meritorious; and in a readiness to palliate the greatest crimes, and to overflow with pity for the greatest criminals. These qualities, in short, seem to be the conditions of a

convention between virtue and vice, by which it is agreed that all hostilities between these, hitherto, irreconcilable enemies, shall cease, and that moral feeling shall no longer take offence at moral turpitude. A convention which, like the pacific treaties of the French Republic, tends to deprive Religion, virtue, and social order, of whatever security they still possess *.

Among the various forms assumed by modern candour, liberality, and moderation, in pursuance of their favourite object—to make vice appear amiable, and to sooth the sufferings of guilt, there is one which involves so daring an attack—so gross an outrage—on those sentiments which have, till now, been considered as the grand bulwarks of virtue, as to entitle it to distinct notice.

The obvious and indissoluble connection, which Providence has been pleased to establish between female chastity and the welfare and safety of civil society, has induced mankind to guard the abovementioned virtue with extraordinary fences of moral sentiment. Hence it is that, among all civilised nations, the woman who has been known to deviate, in a single

* On this subject the reader is referred to the letter signed Cato, in that valuable collection of weekly papers which appeared in the Parliamentary Session of the year, 1797-8, under the title of "The Antijacobin," which letter is founded upon some compliments paid by Mr. Sheridan, to the *increased amiability and conciliating feelings of the age*;—and also to the admirable poem in the same collection, entitled "New Morality."

instance, from the path of virtue, has been invariably condemned to endless infamy, and to a hopeless exclusion from the intercourse of social life. Hence it is, that all of her own sex, who had any regard for their character, were obliged to shun all communication with such a woman, and to appear, at least, to hold her in utter abhorrence. Hence it is, that, of all criminals, she alone was considered as beyond the reach of pardon; that her stain was not to be washed away by all the tears which could flow during a life of penitence; and that, by the sentence of the *world*, she was doomed to carry her guilt with her to the grave*. The extreme mischievousness of her offence, the certainty of destruction to social order, which that offence involves, if ever it be considered as *venial*, gave rise to this apparent severity; a severity, which, by affording the strongest possible protection to female chastity, was, in truth, the most friendly guardian of the fair sex; but which, powerful as it was, has ever been found insufficient to prevent numbers of that sex from passing those bounds, which formed the Rubicon of their honour and happiness.

* If strongly charm'd she leave the thorny way,
And in the softer paths of pleasure stray,
Ruin ensues, reproach, and endless shame,
And one false step entirely damns her fame;
In vain, with tears, the loss she may deplore,
In vain look back to what she was before,
She sets, like stars that fall, to rise no more.

ROWE.

But modern liberality has substituted a milder code for those austere laws. According to that code, crime is no longer sentenced to misery. Virtue is no longer protected by that dread of suffering, which has hitherto been the known and inevitable consequence of vice. The loss of female chastity is no longer deemed an unpardonable offence, an indelible stain. To compensate the harsh treatment which female frailty sometimes receives from those, who persist in judging of actions by ancient rules, the unfortunate sufferer is now solaced with the balm of pity, and this system of amiable indulgence is most assiduously inculcated in the new school of morality *. Nor is the change thus produced, in consequence of the discoveries lately made in the hitherto *terra incognita* of morals, confined to sentiment. Manners partake of the effects resulting from such discoveries. Virtue is now seen publicly to associate with vice. Females, who have no pretensions to chastity, are become companions for some of the most immaculate of their sex. Adulterers and adulteresses are permitted, in recompence of their offence, to enter together within the holy

* The Theatre, which should ever be a school for virtue, is, by being made subservient to the inculcation of such systems, converted into a most dangerous school for vice ;—and while its *stage* is thus perverted to the worst of purposes, almost every other part of it abounds with scenes of such gross indecency and licentiousness, that it is no longer a fit resort for modest women.

pale of matrimony, and thus to encourage others to gratify passions, which might else be considered as hopeless. And, that nothing may be left undone to complete the conquest of prejudice, fashion is labouring, and apparently with great success, to obtain a general sacrifice of that modesty, which is the appointed guardian of female chastity.

What effects such changes in our sentiments and manners are likely to produce, it behoves us most seriously to consider. To assist us in this important inquiry, experience already decides, in the most solemn and impressive manner, against the lax and liberal system of modern morality; and warns us, by the most alarming symptoms of increasing profligacy, to return to those sterner, but more salutary rules, which, because they were found necessary to check the intemperance of passion, and to counteract the force of temptation, were deemed sacred by all past ages. In favour of these rules, particularly as they regard the subject more immediately in discussion, the following sentiments of an English poet display more sound reasoning, aye, and more benevolence too, than can be found in all the writings of the *Pseudo—Philosophers* of the present day.

Virtue and vice had boundaries in old time,
Not to be pass'd ; and she that had renounc'd
Her sex's honour, was renounc'd herself
By all who priz'd it.
T'was hard perhaps on here and there a waif,

Desirous to return and not receiv'd ;
 But 'twas an wholesome rigour in the main,
 And taught th' unblemish'd to preserve with care,
 That purity, whose loss was loss of all.

COWPER.

As a natural consequence of the decay of the moral sense, and of the substitution of those pernicious qualities which usurp its place, the age has to lament the decay of those habits of feeling and acting, which have heretofore been distinguished by the appellation of virtues. But that decay is particularly conspicuous in those virtues which, on account of their pre-eminence, are denominated *cardinal*, and which may be considered as the great land marks of Morality.

PRUDENCE—that vigilant monitor, to whose superintendence is committed the care of all our interests and concerns; whose business it is to preserve, with the attention due to their respective importance, all the advantages we possess, and, with provident foresight, to guard against all the evils which it is in our power to avoid; and who, in the performance of these important duties, is to regulate our feelings and desires according to the dictates of reason; this vigilant monitor—whose utility was anciently described by the emphatical sentiment "*nullum numen abest si sit prudentia*"—has been laid asleep; and, in the mean time, the passions have burst forth, and so disturbed the moral and social order of the world, that vice and crime are

triumphant, and every thing valuable in life is exposed to the most imminent danger of utter destruction:

Deprived of its guardian and coadjutor, TEMPERANCE has been unable to retain that authority, the unremitting exercise of which is necessary to prevent irregular desires from obtaining the mastery; and man, throwing off the beneficial restraint of legitimate controul, is become a slave to the tyranny of passion and of sensual gratification. He has even lost his relish for virtue, and the very power of discerning in what true happiness consists—in the intoxicating draughts of that cup of pleasure, in which vice infuses her most baneful poison.

The present awful state of the political world affords the most melancholy proofs of the want of that true FORTITUDE, which is prompted by a sense of duty and a concern for the public good, and which, by inspiring resolution to meet danger and to endure calamity, affords the most efficacious means of surmounting both. With what dastardly irresolution has Europe temporized with those dangers, which ought to have been faced and encountered with the utmost intrepidity. How basely has nation after nation surrendered itself almost without resistance, to a yoke, in comparison with which, death in the field should have been considered a desirable blessing! In the endurance of this yoke, how abjectly do millions upon millions of human beings crouch before their tyrant, and kiss the

rod with which he scourges them, in the fear of provoking a severer display of his fury! And with what pusillanimous torpor do the continental nations, not yet subdued, await a similar destiny, that nothing human can avert, but the triumphant efforts of a power, which, unassisted and alone, is now displaying all its energies in the cause of all civilised society!

But in no respect have the dominion of luxury and the perversion of Religious and moral principle produced such baneful effects as in the corruption of that paramount virtue, which is denominated JUSTICE, and which, on account of its superior importance, has been justly entitled—*Domina et Regina virtutum*. This virtue, by prompting to a conscientious discharge of every social duty, is the grand tie which connects each individual with his fellow creatures, and which thereby preserves the order of society. By maintaining a constant and lively sense of the rights of others, it preserves us from selfishness, the deadly bane of all virtue; while, by regulating our feelings upon those rights, it preserves, a due gradation between our various social affections, according to the strength, nearness and importance of the relations by which we are connected with the rest of the world; securing to parental, filial, conjugal, fraternal, neighbourly, patriotic, and benevolent feelings, the degree of force which they ought respectively to possess, in order to ensure the performance of the various duties, for the sake of

which such feelings are implanted in our bosoms by the author of nature.

No wonder then that the enemies of social order should make this high and transcendant virtue, the grand object of their attack. No wonder that they should endeavour to destroy the ancient scale of rights and duties, and to regulate all social claims, not by the equitable and sympathetic principle of mutual relations, but by a cold and vague calculation of individual merit. No wonder that they should seek to invert the natural order of feeling, by sacrificing all our nearest, and hitherto, thank Heaven, dearest attachments, to the sentiment of general benevolence; a sentiment, which, on account of the remoteness of its object, must be comparatively cold, and which, if it were to supersede all other sentiments, would leave the heart a dreary void—destitute both of affection and virtue.

Shocking as these systems undoubtedly are, and preposterous as they seem to be, they have yet, with the aid of fanaticism, and in conjunction with the vicious habits resulting from luxury, had no small effect in producing those glaring and unprecedented violations of justice, which evince the depravity, while they account for the calamities, of the present age. Violations, displayed in the triumph of ambition, fraud, and injustice, over the most valuable rights of men, over the most sacred laws of nations. The human mind cannot trace, without consternation,

the rapidity and extent of that triumph, from the moment when the rights of property and of Government, in a neighbouring country, were first attacked by a metaphysical revolution, founded upon the new philosophy, to this most fearful and agonizing crisis, when the people of that country, transformed by the principles and practices of their revolution into a nation of ruffians and robbers, have established an almost universal empire of pillage and rapine. The tendency of such an example of successful injustice, to unsettle and enfeeble all just sentiments in the human mind, is awfully manifest in the disposition—which is almost generally displayed, by nations not yet reduced to subjection—and which, as it facilitates his triumph, the enemy artfully encourages—formally to acquiesce in his system of rapacity and spoliation, on condition of being allowed a precarious participation in the spoil. Thus do force and seduction combine, to extinguish all moral feeling, and all sense of justice ; and in this daring attack they are powerfully assisted by the luxurious habits and by the relaxation of principle, which have long been gaining ground. These primary causes of corruption operate in a most alarming manner, even in this country, although under the happy influence of our inimitable constitution, we still pursue a system of foreign policy, which exhibits a striking contrast to that adopted by other countries. But, at home, it is impossible to deny, that an inordinate love of pleasure, and an insatiable lust of gain, have

produced an alarming indifference to every relative duty, and every social feeling; a sensible increase of fraud, perfidy, knavery and peculation; and a rapid approach towards that state of selfishness, which involves a total disregard for the rights and the happiness of others, and, by a just retribution, a complete sacrifice of our own felicity.

A more convincing proof of the decay of justice amongst us can scarcely be conceived than the gross evasion of the public duties, of which we are notoriously guilty. Regardless of the command to *render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, many of us, on a late occasion, defrauded the public revenue in so shameless a manner, that a tax, on the productiveness of which our very existence as a nation seemed almost to depend, did not yield one half of the amount, which, upon a low computation, and after a reasonable allowance for partial evasion, it ought to have produced; and every person who had any moral feeling was shocked at the many instances of gross and wilful defalcation, which came within his notice.

This is an alarming symptom of our approach towards that state of apathy for the most obvious, as well as the most important interests, which is the natural consequence of a decay of moral feeling, and of which the world now exhibits such astonishing proofs. All the causes, which have led to modern depravity, have combined to produce this effect; but luxury has been its principal cause, by render-

ing mankind indifferent to every thing but personal gratification. The direful result has been, that the present most calamitous and perilous state of the world has failed to make that impression, without which it would denote the most egregious folly to indulge a hope, that the still greater dangers which impend may be averted. While a great part of Europe has exhibited the most heart-rending tragedy, which, for years, has threatened, and which still threatens, to involve, in its catastrophe, the whole human race, men have scarcely displayed a more than ordinary concern for the present, and, literally, they have manifested no solicitude for the future. Councils and senates have treated as a common war, a contest which menaced with ruin every existing government, and which, from its commencement, was fraught with instant danger to every institution, Religious and civil. The most horrible scenes of carnage, commotion, and anarchy, have been unable to disturb, except in the very spot where they occurred, and for the moment while they lasted, the course of luxury and dissipation. And mankind are now standing on the brink of an abyss of ruin, which seems to yawn for them, with as much carelessness and unconcern, as if they were roaming in a garden of sweets, far remote from every danger, and secure of the uninterrupted possession of every delight.

But this is not all. The baneful influence of modern systems and manners has been peculiarly

manifest in the decay of that truly Christian virtue, the value of which was never discovered, until it was most earnestly recommended by the precepts and most strikingly displayed in the example, of the blessed Author of our holy Religion. Where are now to be found any vestiges of that humility, which, like the principle of gravitation in the physical world, tends, in the moral, to keep every thing in its due place; which is indispensable to the existence of a sense of duty, and of a disposition to render justice, to others; which, in the youthful mind, is the fostering nurse of every excellence, and the necessary preparation for future usefulness? To this benign and decorous grace has succeeded a self-sufficiency, which makes every one over-rate his claims on others, and undervalue his obligations to them; which, in early life, extinguishes the animating flame of generous emulation, and renders vanity and conceit insurmountable obstacles to improvement; and which, by generating pride and arrogance, disposes men to mutual hostility, and gives a boundless scope to the passions which disturb the quiet and order of the world. To the extinction of humility in the human mind, may be attributed, in a great degree, the suppression of gratitude in the human heart. The acts of kindness, which ought to call forth the liveliest emotions of thankfulness, and which were apt to have that effect in former times, are now considered only as a right, and often as very inadequate to the extent of just and unalienable

claims. It is indeed a distinguished part of the new philosophical system, to subject gratitude to ridicule, as a contemptible weakness; nay, even to expose it to detestation, as an actual vice. Thus would the regenerators of the human race dry up the very sources of that benevolence, which they pretend to idolize, as the sum and substance of all virtue—for to confer benefits, or to display kindness without a hope of a grateful return, is beyond any degree of perfection, which, under the new philosophy, the human character can be expected to attain.

Together with humility and gratitude, the congenial virtue of fidelity is evidently on the decline. To this virtue the utmost consequence has ever been attached, and the want of it has been allowed to denote complete depravity. When incorruptible by wealth, and invincible by danger, it has been always deemed to shed a high lustre on the character in which it appeared; and, when displayed in the exalted form of loyalty, it has justly been considered as cementing all the ties of society. This splendid and valuable virtue, after being relaxed by the enervating softness of luxurious dissipation, is now held forth to scorn by that new school of morality, which, under the specious pretence of solicitude for general happiness and universal liberty, teaches its disciples to substitute vanity and egotism for every affection that can improve or adorn our nature. See the lessons of this school exemplified in the treatment ex-

perienced by Louis the Sixteenth, at the hands of his subjects—who requited the numerous virtues of that Monarch, and the truly paternal anxiety displayed by him for the happiness of his people, by the grossest ingratitude and the basest treachery, by open rebellion, by captivity,—by regicide. Contrast this treatment with the well authenticated instances of active and incorruptible fidelity, by which the unfortunate Prince, Charles Edward Stuart, was preserved amidst dangers, which seemed insurmountable, and which must have proved so, but for the almost incredible efforts of his faithful, though then, hopeless adherents.

See this Prince, for several months after his defeat at Culloden, in the power of great numbers of wretchedly poor Highlanders, not one of whom could be tempted by the splendid bait of thirty thousand pounds, which was offered for his person, to betray the unhappy wanderer—these loyal people displaying such proofs of their fidelity, although above half a century had elapsed since his family had sat upon the throne, to which they owed allegiance. How different the conduct of the actual subjects of Louis, when that unhappy Monarch, after being loaded, for nearly two years, with indignities and insults, was, in his endeavour to escape from confinement, stopped at Varennes, by the activity of the ever infamous Drouet—whose name can never be mentioned without indignation and horror. On that occasion, the utmost zeal was displayed, by all

descriptions of persons, to sound the alarm, and to stop the flight of their lawful Sovereign. Nay, such was the treasonable ardour which had been inspired by revolutionary principles, that a gentleman, M. de Dampierre, who happened to be on the road when this horrid transaction attracted his notice, was actually murdered by the mob of furies, who surrounded the royal carriage, merely because he sought, unarmed, to approach their Majesties, and to testify, by his looks, his loyalty and his grief! But to bring the comparison between ancient fidelity and modern revolutionary treachery to a still narrower point. See the *friend to man kind*, la Fayette, who, when he discovered the departure of his royal Master with his Queen and children, instantly dispatched an aid-du-camp, with orders to give public notice of their flight, and to obtain the assistance of all "*good citizens*," to obstruct it; a measure which, by preventing the rescue of the royal fugitives by M. de Bouillé, made its author the cause of their being again brought within the power of their enemies, and, of course, subjects him to the guilt of their subsequent murder. With treachery like this, compare the heroic fidelity of Captain Mackenzie, who, when the ill-fated Charles Edward was endeavouring to conceal himself from his numerous pursuers, was overtaken by a party engaged in the pursuit, and perceiving that he was mistaken for his master, to whom he bore a strong resemblance, stood gallantly on the defensive. The conjectures of his antagonists being confirmed by

his desperate resistance, they shot him ; when firm to his purpose, of turning them from the pursuit, he cried out with his expiring breath, “ VILLAINS, YOU HAVE KILLED YOUR PRINCE.”

In order to complete the sketch, here attempted to be given, of this degenerate age, it remains to be observed, that the ordinary habits of modern life partake of, and serve to increase, the general depravity. The age exhibits a manifest relaxation in regard to industry, regularity, and punctuality. A general love of ease and pleasure the natural fruit of long indulgence, makes it an object of constant and universal endeavour, to transact every business with as small a degree of exertion as possible ; and the extraordinary facilities which have been discovered, to relieve labour, both of mind and body, favour, in a remarkable degree the success of such an endeavour. The consequence is that, in spite of those facilities, no business is so well done as formerly, when diligence was agreeable, because it was habitual—when the practical maxim of the useful part of society was—*labor ipse voluptas*—to say nothing of the constant failure that takes place in the performance of engagements, within the specified time. In the most respectable lines of utility the character of a real man of business is in danger of expiring with those persons, who formed their habits during the Old Stile : and the inferiority which is evident in the most common products of industry, when compared with their former excellence, is a standing proof of a great diminution

of care and diligence, even in what are called the labouring classes. Indeed the diminution of productive labour among mechanics and artisans is become a very serious evil, both in a political and moral point of view. While the most useful, because the most necessary labourer, the cultivator of the soil, is under the *happy* necessity of employing unremitting industry, a very large proportion of those persons, who are engaged in the various branches of manufacture, are enabled, by a high rate of wages, to pass two, nay, often three, working days in each week, in idleness and dissipation—and it may, among such persons, be considered as a general rule, that their labour and their pay are in an inverse ratio to each other *. Hence, the state loses a large portion of its effective strength—the industry of its inhabitants; the morals of the unfortunate individuals are corrupted; and a spirit of insubordination endangers the security of property, and the existence of social order.

Among the higher classes, the modern arrangement of time is alike unfavourable to industry and morals—an arrangement, which is commonly described by the familiar epithet—*late hours*; and which

* Surely the happiness as well as the utility of the various and valuable classes of artisans and mechanics, and indeed the safety and good order of the State, call loudly upon the Legislature to counteract, more effectually, these combinations for an increase of wages. They have already succeeded in this object to a degree which almost ensures their own corruption, which has given a dreadful blow to subordination, and greatly lessened the security of property.

allots to debilitating dissipation, and to enervating repose, portions of time, the devotion of which, according to the dictates of nature, to activity, or to seasonable rest, would conduce to invigoration and health. Such an arrangement of time has a pernicious effect in all the concerns and duties of life, particularly in those which have any other object than personal interest. Equally just and striking is the familiar saying, that if a man lose an hour in the morning he is running after it the whole day. But what a scene of hurry must that day be, the very commencement of which is postponed to a late hour. Business, in such a case, will be imperfectly, because hastily performed; dependents, released, in a great degree, from supervision and controul, will slacken in their care and attention; and punctuality, essential as it is to convenience and comfort, will be banished, not merely from engagements of the first importance, but from those of friendship and conviviality; and the festive board itself will partake of the general want of regularity and precision. The physical effects of such an arrangement of time are too obvious to require particular notice. But it should not escape observation, that the pernicious influence of late hours on bodily health, must produce a proportionable diminution of mental vigour—a consequence certainly injurious to morals. For habits of virtue, particularly in a corrupted age, cannot be formed without many struggles; and to sustain, with sufficient resolution,

those struggles, much vigour of mind is necessary. It is, moreover, evident, that late nocturnal hours, by being favourable to dissipation, tend exceedingly to increase temptations to vice. In short, it may be considered as an indisputable truth, that no habit, which is not in its own nature vicious, can be more injurious to virtue than that which now generally prevails, in regard to the arrangement of time; and persons of rank and weight in society, would render it an essential service, if they were to employ the powerful influence of their example, in restoring modes of life more congenial with utility, with health, and with good morals.

Should it be thought that some of the topics, which have been here noticed, have received more attention than they deserve, it should be remembered that nothing can be of trifling importance, which relates to morals; and that an imperceptible stream may, by undermining the foundations, gradually endanger the safety of an edifice, the walls of which might securely defy the violence of the torrent. Many things which appear trivial to a superficial observer, are intimately connected with the welfare and, indeed, with the existence of Society; and, at a time like the present, the importance of such things is inconceivably increased. Of this the foe is well aware; for there is nothing, however unimportant it may appear, by which he does not endeavour to promote the success of his attack on all social institutions. In scarcely any instance has he shewn a more profound know-

ledge of human nature, or displayed a more artful adaptation of his means to his object, than in endeavouring to serve the cause of general subversion by superseding those external appendages, which are used to distinguish the various classes of Society. It is with the deepest artifice, as well as with a perfect consistency of character and views, that the modern philosophers, in pursuance of their levelling system, have declared war against Titles and Armorial Bearings; that they have even attacked those forms of dress, which have been long used to distinguish the higher orders, and introduced a garb which tends to confound all distinction of rank. The signal for this attack was given in France, and it has been repeated, in every country, by all who wished to promote the cause of anarchy. Unfortunately many, who in their hearts abhor that cause, have been prevailed upon to shew a contempt for outward appearances. It behoves such persons to consider that the sentiment, denominated *respect*, is a necessary bond of the Social Union; that this sentiment, by its mild operation, gives vigour to authority, and efficacy to laws; that it harmonizes the whole system of Society, and, without any effort, keeps every part of it, from the lowest to the highest, in its proper place. But this highly valuable sentiment never can, with the mass of mankind, be the result of reflection. It would be impossible, by any chain of reasoning, to convince the multitude that it is essential to their happiness. Neither can it be, ac-

according to the system of modern philosophers, a pure homage to merit and virtue—and indeed, if it could there is reason to fear that very few of those philosophers would be the objects of such homage.—To secure its existence, it must depend upon causes more certain and universal in their operation, than the claims of virtue or merit. It must even operate where no such claims are *known* to exist. It must be, in short, as it has ever been, a spontaneous impulse, which no reflection is necessary to produce; and which must be excited by the mere presence or idea of its object. It is to some external distinction that the child is taught to bow with reverence, until an association is formed, in his mind, between that distinction, and a feeling of respect; so that the latter is sure to be called forth by the appearance of the former.

In this manner, according to the philosophy of nature, all our beneficial impulses, even that of filial affection itself, are produced. For, upon the principles of *that* philosophy, man is a creature of sensation and habit, as well as of reason. Not only are all his impressions originally derived from the senses, but they frequently terminate there, without exciting a single reflection in his mind; and the most improved and cultivated understandings are incapable of freeing themselves from this dominion of sense. It is thus that nature effects the most important ends by the most simple means; providing for the attainment of whatever is indispensable

to the well being of Society, by the operation of causes, which, instead of being partial or precarious, are universal, certain and invariable. It is thus that emblems, which are used to denote the most elevated dignities, although, abstractedly considered, of very trifling value, excite in the mind sentiments of the most beneficial awe and reverence; sentiments favourable to liberty as well as good order—since they assist government in performing its functions with the least possible degree of force, by rendering the submission of subjects voluntary, cheerful and habitual, rather than the effect of compulsion. Nay, even the influence of Religion upon the human mind is most usefully promoted by the observance of solemnities, which operate by the senses. Nothing, therefore, can serve more effectually to promote the mischievous design, which has lately been formed, of disturbing, and, indeed, of dissolving, all the relations of Society, than to bring into contempt such emblems and solemnities. What could tend more to withdraw the allegiance of subjects from their Sovereign, than, like the anarchist Paine, to teach them to consider the Crown as an artificial bauble, of no more value than the gold and jewels which it contains?—What could more effectually serve to bring Religion into contempt, than to prevail on mankind to despise the solemnities, which they have been accustomed to observe in its public celebration?

But the emblems of Royalty, and the solemn-

ties of Religion, excite only that high degree of respect, which is denominated Reverence, and they are therefore calculated only for occasional display. It is in the common intercourse of life that the sentiments of respect, which, by preserving the gradations, constitute one chief bond of Society, must be formed and maintained. But it would be impossible either to produce or to keep alive those sentiments, without the aid of some external distinction, which, operating directly upon the senses, may, by the instinctive force of habit, invariably excite the accustomed impression. The two species of external distinction, which are best fitted to produce such effects, are manners and dress; which, while they are necessary to support a claim to respect, are not calculated to raise in the mind any of those invidious ideas of painful comparison, that other distinctions may call forth. A difference which is expressive of some exclusive personal gratification—as a splendid house, a sumptuous table—is, of itself, more likely to excite envy than respect; but the latter sentiment alone is produced by manners and dress, when they correspond with the rank of the individual. Indeed, these personal distinctions, tend materially to counteract the invidious reflections, which the disparities of fortune are apt to suggest. Of the two kinds of external distinction manners and dress, indispensable as they both are, the latter is the most operative upon the bulk of mankind. Cultivated manners are calculated chiefly

to make an impression on cultivated minds ; but dress is more exclusively an object of sense, and it is, therefore, most fitted to operate on the mass of Society. It wants no aid from reason, education, or reflection. It is simple and obvious ; it instantaneously strikes the senses ; and it is uniform, constant, and invariable, in its operation. It is a symbol which no one can misunderstand, which every one, entitled to it, may without difficulty possess, and it denotes a claim, which, being founded in custom, the most solid foundation of all claims, every one is ready to allow. The necessity of exterior appendages, in order to keep alive sentiments of respect, and to afford additional aid to authority, is recognized by the most barbarous nations ; and the Indian Chief, when he displays his gaudy feathers and tinsel ornaments—when his scarified body exhibits a painful pre-eminence beyond the extent of plebeian privilege—proves himself a much better judge of human nature and of Society, than the ablest advocate for the sublime system of modern philosophy.

In effect, the result of these reflections should be to induce, at this time, a more than ordinary attention to the ceremonial usages of well ordered society. The daring attempt which has been made, to overthrow all social establishments, gives to every barrier and outwork of such establishments a great additional importance ; and it should impel every one, who wishes for their preservation, not only to

observe the solemnities of Religion, and to treat the emblems of authority, with an *unusual* degree of reverence, but also to preserve, with scrupulous attention, every form which has been accustomed to command respect. The manners of cultivated life, which, while they characterize station, serve also to promote the general observance of decency and decorum; the laws of heraldry, which have for ages been among the guardians of birth and dignity; nay, even the distinctions of dress, which are necessary at once to mark and to defend the gradations of rank in society; all these considerations acquire new claims to attention, because a contempt for such manners, laws, and distinctions, is made subservient to the cause of Anarchy, and because every neglect of them, is a sacrifice in favour of that cause.

Such, alas! upon the whole, is the present moral state of society; such are the direful effects of luxury, co-operating with the modern systems of infidelity and philosophy; effects which appear, indeed, in various degrees in different countries, but which are dreadfully conspicuous in all. It is obvious that such a state must, in the nature of things, lead, at length, to general disturbance, contention, and anarchy—to the subversion of all established Government—and to the subjection of the human race to the merciless and incessantly fluctuating dominion of the most ferocious and sanguinary monsters. What less than these dreadful consequences can be

expected to result, when human depravity, which, unless it be most powerfully checked, must continue to be rapidly progressive, shall have arrived at such a pitch, as to extinguish all Religion and virtue in the human breast; to render the passions of men absolutely ungovernable; to produce an universal restlessness and dissatisfaction, an utter contempt for every species of authority, human and divine, and a hatred of every restraint, Religious, political and domestic; when, in short, it shall have effected a dissolution, not only of those broader ties of respect and subordination, in which consists the vigour of authority; but also of those finer ligaments—the social affections, the Religious principles, and the virtuous habits—which constitute the *stamina* of society?

Happily for mankind, they are not yet arrived at this state of extreme depravity; happily too, the situation, in which the civilized world is now placed, is not the consequence merely of its irreligion, its corrupted principles, and its vicious habits. Other circumstances have co-operated with the degeneracy of the age, in producing the explosion, which has shaken the social edifice to its foundations. If that explosion had been delayed, until the human race had reached the last stage of moral corruption; until the volcanic elements of social destruction, infidelity, luxury and vice, had acquired sufficient force to produce it, without the concurrence of extraordinary political causes, it

would have been fatal in the first instance, and the barriers of society must have fallen at the first blast of the trumpet of Anarchy. But the deleterious influence of human depravity was a necessary, though it has not been the sole cause of the evils which we deplore, and of the dangers which we apprehend. Without that influence the French Revolution could not have proved so general and so grievous a scourge to mankind. This dreadful Revolution has derived, if not its existence, at least its main force, from the vitiated state of society. To this it is indebted for the most atrocious and destructive character which it has assumed, for the production of such monsters as Robespierre, Marat, Le Bon, and Buonaparte, and for the dreadful ravages by which it has desolated a great part of the earth. The great progress which it has made, in so short a space of time, is evidently owing to the decay of Religious and moral principles. If those principles had been in a flourishing state, the attack, if it had taken place, could not have been so violent, and the defence would have been unspeakably more vigorous. But unhappily the influence of those principles was greatly enfeebled, and those of an opposite nature had attained a very high degree of force, when mankind were surprised by this terrible conflict. Hence it is, that the Revolution has made such astonishing advances towards the overthrow of all social establishments; and, to judge from present appearances, it will accomplish that overthrow, unless it be resisted by means

very different from those which have been hitherto employed.

What means should be resorted to, in order to prevent so dreadful a catastrophe, it cannot, surely, be difficult to discover. In a great moral contest—in a struggle involving the existence of all the Religious and political establishments of the world, where can any adequate defence of those establishments be found, but in the mass of Religion and virtue still remaining in society? Happily, notwithstanding our great depravity, that mass, at least in this country, is still considerable. Happily, the establishments which are attacked, are still cherished and venerated by a large portion of mankind. But our stock of Religion and virtue will not avail us, unless it be called forth, in an extraordinary manner, into action. It must be excited and exerted in a degree, proportionate to the immense interests it has to defend. A contest like this every individual should consider as a trial of his virtue, and as calling upon him to rouse all the faculties of his soul, and all the energies of his heart, for the preservation of whatever is dear and valuable in social life. He should do his utmost to inspire others with a sense of the common danger, and to stimulate them to come forward in the common cause. If all persons, who are still really attached to the Government which protected them in the helpless and exposed state of infancy, and to the Religion which they have been taught, from their tenderest years, to consider as

their unerring guide, both to temporal and eternal felicity, were to raise their voice in support of these establishments, and to avow a just and manly indignation against every attempt to subvert them, a new impulse would be given to society, and the danger would be instantly, and greatly diminished. But such persons, if they really mean to secure the blessings which they still enjoy, and to transmit them to posterity, must not be satisfied with raising their voice, or giving vent to their indignation. They must call forth their utmost exertions in a cause, on the issue of which so much depends. They must consider themselves as engaged in a conflict, in which defeat would be fatal, not only to themselves, but to all for whom they have any regard. They must take care, moreover, to be armed at all points for such a conflict, and they must be cautious not to give the enemy any advantage. They must remember that they are combating with an adversary, who seeks to pierce the vitals of social order, through the sides of Christianity and good morals ; which, therefore, it is necessary, in a peculiar manner, to guard and to defend. They must, therefore, be more than ordinarily mindful of their own deportment, and must deem it incumbent upon them to observe all the ordinances of Religion, and to perform all the duties of morality, with exemplary regularity ; remembering that every neglect of those ordinances, and every violation of those duties, is an injury to that cause,

which involves, in its issue, all their hopes and all their interests, at least on this side of the grave. But in addition to these common and universal duties, still higher duties devolve upon all who are blessed with any extraordinary talents or opportunities, beyond the usual lot of mankind. Every talent, which, at a time like this, is buried, will certainly rise up in condemnation against him to whom it is entrusted. Every one should, therefore, be studious to discover how he may best exert the powers, which Heaven has given him, in the great cause of society. He should, after great and unwearied exertions, think that he has done nothing, so long as any thing, within the compass of his ability, remains to be performed. He should consider every situation which may afford him peculiar means of utility, as imposing upon him the most solemn obligation to improve it to the utmost. The possession of wealth, rank, office; the functions of the magistrate or the legislator; should be considered as imperious calls for eminent and appropriate services.

Most of all the sacred profession obliges its members to great and unremitting exertions. At all times it behoves a Christian minister to recommend, with all the earnestness in his power, the performance of every duty, Religious, moral and civil, prescribed by the Christian Code, and it is particularly incumbent upon him to improve to the utmost all opportunities, which are peculiarly calculated to give effect to his

exhortations. When the mind is alarmed by calamity, and softened by danger, then may the functions of the pulpit be exercised with the greatest hopes of success--in warning men, by repentance and amendment, and particularly by laying aside those sins, of whatever kind, by which the times are distinguished, to avert the displeasure of that Being, who, either by the ordinary, or the extraordinary dispensations of his Providence, is sure to requite great wickedness by severe suffering. Never was an opportunity for such warnings so favourable—never was their urgency so great—as at this moment. The mind of man must be impenetrable as the adamant rock, if it be not now susceptible of admonition. And while, on the one hand, the extreme depravity of the age must be regarded as the natural source of great misfortunes, there seems, on the other, abundant reason to consider the severe calamities which it now suffers, as awful symptoms of Divine anger. At such a time, shall not the sacred monitors cry aloud, and warn men of the evils by which they are surrounded? Shall they not explain the true causes which have led to so awful a situation, and point out those means of deliverance which they are authorized, by their mission, to offer? Shall they be deterred from describing, in the strongest manner, the perils to which the Religious as well as the civil establishments of society are exposed? Shall the pulpit be silent when the altar is attacked? Or shall

its ministers fail to animate their auditors to stand forward, in defence of Christianity itself, against the host of enemies by which it is assailed? At a moment so awful as the present, shall they neglect to avail themselves of the great advantage, afforded them by a sense of public danger, to conjure the human race to pause in their career of folly, dissipation, and wickedness, and by an instant and thorough reformation, to preserve themselves from miseries, which the tongue of man cannot describe, nor even his heart conceive?

But in the performance of this important, and now, most urgent task, they must not suffer themselves to be deterred, by prevailing prejudices, from inculcating *any* of the duties, which are prescribed by the Christian Code. Nothing that is commanded by our Holy Religion, should be left untaught by the Christian pulpit; and particular stress ought, surely, to be laid upon those commands, in an attention to which the age may be particularly deficient *. Now, besides a general

* It is impossible to witness the extraordinary efforts of many ministers of the Church of England to produce suitable impressions, at this alarming crisis, upon the minds of the people of this country, without indulging the pleasing hope that, under Divine favour, we may yet be spared. The charges which have been delivered by several of the Bishops to their clergy, and which have also been made public, afford a happy presage, that the salutary impulse will pervade the whole of the sacred order. Those charges, though strictly confined to topics which are clearly within the province of a

corruption of Religious and moral principles, and a consequent depravity in practice, the present age is peculiarly deficient in its attention to the obligations of subjects to Government, and even in a knowledge of those obligations—though clearly unfolded in the sacred volume, which is the unerring rule both of principle and of practice. Nay, so far has human presumption extended itself on this important subject, that systems are assiduously inculcated, even as a part of education, which—in direct contradiction to the express declarations of Scripture that *all Power is of God*—as well as to the invariable course of nature and of experience, which would itself be sufficient evidence of the Divine Will—teach the preposterous and most disorderly doctrines, that *the origin of Power is the will of many, and that its continuance ought to depend upon their pleasure*. The consequence of such doctrines has been a disposition to disregard, and even to despise the Divine com-

christian Bishop, cast such a light upon the present state of society—upon the causes which have reduced it to so melancholy a situation—and upon the means on which alone it can depend for safety—that they deserve the serious attention of the statesman and the legislator.

Among the Laity too, notwithstanding the general insensibility which prevails, there are encouraging instances of suitable impressions, and of seasonable exertions. Societies have also been formed, consisting both of clergy and laity, which have a most beneficial tendency at a time like the present. The Proclamation Society and the Society for the Suppression of Vice, have rendered essential service to the cause of Religion and virtue.

mands, by which the governed are most solemnly enjoined to obey and to honour their governors; and this disposition is one of the prevailing sins of the age, and one of the chief causes of its misfortunes. A minister of Religion would, therefore, be guilty of a gross neglect of duty, if he did not, at such a time, most emphatically enforce the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law upon this important subject.*

The introduction of such topics into the pulpit is often invidiously censured by the misapplication of a common-place remark, in itself very vague and superficial, that the pulpit is not the proper place for politics. But very little consideration will enable any one to distinguish between those temporary questions—which excite the animosity of contending parties, and which afford the proper definition of the term politics, in its usual acceptance—and those universal and permanent obligations, which are not only prescribed by morality, but clearly and positively enjoined by Divine authority.

But a contest so important and so arduous as the present, calls for more than individual exertions. It demands all the aid which sympathy and co-operation can afford it. The cause is general—the danger is universal. The assailants set an example of the closest union and concert. They act upon a regular and thoroughly digested system. They sacrifice all private differences to their common ob-

* He is, indeed, expressly commanded to do this. See Titus iii. 1.

ject. Shall their opponents be destitute of the same advantages? Shall they who defend their altars and their thrones, be satisfied with separate and unconnected endeavours? Shall they be outdone, either in vigour or in harmony, by the agents of infidelity, and anarchy? Shall they not forget their mutual differences, and, considering themselves as united by the strongest ties of reciprocal duty and of congenial feeling, reserve all their animosity for the common enemy and his coadjutors?

At a period of darkness and barbarism, the friends of society successfully encountered the evils of the times by a regular, well-cemented, and durable association, which corrected the manners of the age, and diffused the most valuable blessings over successive generations. An association which, while, by its heroic achievements, it afforded protection to the feeble—deliverance to the oppressed—and security to the innocent—cultivated the most refined sentiments, and rendered urbanity, honour and justice, objects of universal admiration. Does not the present period imperiously demand a similar resource? Shall not the friends of Religion, of virtue, and of social order, throughout the Christian world, consider themselves as forming, from this moment, A GRAND ASSOCIATION, for the preservation of those inestimable blessings? Shall they not consider themselves as pledged to each other, and to society at large, by the strongest ties of honour and conscience—by the highest obligations of Religion and morality, to engage in a steady, re-

solite, and interminable conflict with infidelity, vice, and anarchy; and to cultivate, to the utmost of their power, both by precept and example, those sentiments, principles and dispositions, the prevalence of which would afford the best security against the attacks of the above foes to social happiness? If even the comparatively few and unconnected individuals, who, in different countries, are desirous to stem the torrent which threatens to overwhelm the world—if those persons were animated by the confidence which is produced by a certainty of mutual support—if they were inspired by that generous and emulative ardour, which the consciousness of being jointly and solemnly engaged in so glorious a cause, could not fail to inspire; and if their efforts were harmoniously and systematically directed, by an unity of means, to a common object, they would form a Social Phalanx, which it would be out of the power of the enemy to pierce, and around the standard of which the friends of lawful government would every where rally and unite.

But whoever enlists in this great cause, must be careful not to forget, even for a moment, the awful truth, that the present calamitous and perilous situation of the world is chiefly owing to its *moral depravity*—For, from this truth it follows, as a necessary consequence, that there can be no effectual remedy, but a *thorough and radical reformation—a general correction both of principle and practice*. Every other expedient will be, at best, but a pal-

liative, and will leave the cause of the evil untouched. Although the impending dangers should be averted—although society should be restored to the state of apparent safety, which it enjoyed before the French revolution—although the restoration of lawful government in France, should inspire mankind with the most confident expectation of general and permanent security, yet nothing more than a temporary escape will be effected, unless the baneful influence of infidelity, immoral philosophy, and luxury, be subdued. Nay, the general satisfaction and confidence, which would be inspired by a deliverance from those political dangers that fill every reflecting mind with consternation—and the prospect, which the too sanguine eye of hope would discover, of a long enjoyment of general and uninterrupted prosperity—would infuse fresh vigour into the above implacable enemies of social order, and free them from that partial restraint, which a sense of present and extreme danger may impose on their progress. The causes which have enabled the French revolution to menace the earth with universal anarchy, will give the same force to future convulsions, when society shall be less able to withstand the shock; and political events will never be wanting, to afford occasion for disturbance, when all the principles of social order shall be still more enfeebled, and those of strife and confusion shall have received further accessions of strength. If, therefore, the still existing social establishments, the over-

throw of which would involve the human race in calamities, which, for extent and duration, surpass all powers of thought—if those establishments should escape the perils to which they are now exposed, they would not attain any security beyond the actual moment; nay, they would be speedily exposed to fresh danger, unless their natural bulwarks—Religion and morality, be strengthened: unless a great change take place in the *morals* and *manners* of society.

The nature of this necessary change must be obvious to every one, upon a moment's reflection. It is not, like that proposed by the absurd system of human perfectibility, incompatible with the nature of man, at variance with his original feelings and his earliest habits, and hostile to all his institutions as a social being. No; it has for its object the attainment of practicable ends by natural means; it does not profess to render man a perfect—but only an improved being; it is to be produced by the aid of his original impressions and early attachments, which for that purpose must be reinforced; and it is friendly to all the institutions to which he has been accustomed from his birth. Neither would it tend to alter his condition, or to deprive him of any advantage which he now possesses. On the contrary, its effect would be, to render him more fit for that condition, and for those advantages—it would qualify him for that state of high prosperity, in which he has been placed by wealth and civilization, and

which has hitherto proved his greatest misfortune, because it has not been accompanied with a proportionate improvement in his moral character. That without such an improvement, prosperity is a curse, instead of a blessing, is a truth too obvious to require illustration. What is it which renders a sudden acquisition of fortune highly dangerous, and often destructive, to the individual who is thereby, in general estimation, rendered an object of envy—but that his mind and heart have not been prepared for his new situation? What is it but a difference in Religious and moral principles and habits, which renders the possession, even of *inherited* opulence, in *one* man a blessing to himself and others, and a source of the most exalted pleasures—the pleasures of benevolence; and in *another* the cause of debauchery, infamy, misery, and premature death? Nay, even in the humblest stations, how is the same truth exemplified in the profligate lives, in the miserable existence, physical and moral, of those manufacturing labourers, whose high wages enable them to support their families by the industry of a part of the week—when contrasted with the comparatively virtuous and happy lives of the cultivators of the soil, whose utmost hope never extends beyond the procuring of a maintenance, by the unremitting labour of six days in seven, throughout the year. In short, it is a maxim which has been delivered to us by the oracles of wisdom, and uniformly verified in all ages by human expe-

rience, that “ The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” Without such an improvement, as an English writer, eminently distinguished for the profundity of his researches into human nature, observes, “ Prosperity itself, whilst any thing, supposed desirable is not our own, begets extravagant and unbounded thoughts. Imagination is altogether as much a source of discontent as any thing in our external condition *.”

Society, like an individual, is a moral being, and subject to the operation of the same causes; with this material difference, however, that those causes operate with increased influence, in proportion to the number of persons on whom they collectively act; but in a ratio greatly exceeding the progressive increase of those numbers. Therefore, general prosperity, still more than *that* of an individual, requires a corresponding degree of moral improvement; not merely to render it a blessing, but to prevent its being a fatal misfortune. We have seen, in the foregoing reflections, that the prosperity of modern times has been attended, not with a suitable improvement, but with a dreadful deterioration of the moral state of man. And unless that beneficial change, which should have gone hand in hand with prosperity, can now be brought about, the advantages which we possess beyond our ancestors, and on which we set so high a value, will plunge us into

* Butler's Analogy, c. 5.

an abyss of misery, which will swallow up the happiness of the present generation, and the hopes of generations yet to come.

It is plain, then, that the proposed change, if it could be accomplished, far from being attended with a sacrifice of our present prosperity, would be favourable to its continuance, and that the moral improvement of mankind, in proportion to its degree and its permanence, would tend to perpetuate their welfare. It would be conducive to social happiness in all its forms. It would be friendly, in the highest degree, to good order and general tranquillity. It would be peculiarly favourable to freedom ; for it is obvious, that in proportion to the prevalence of irreligion and licentiousness, all authority must be enfeebled, and, in that case, government must be driven to maintain itself by the imposition of extraordinary restraints*. The real source of despotism is not so much the tyrannical disposition of governors, as the depravity of the governed. Nor let it be supposed that such a change would interfere with any of the enjoyments of life. On the contrary, it would, in an unspeakable degree, increase the sum of those enjoyments. By the irrevocable decrees of Him, who gave to man all his powers and faculties, there is no happiness for moral agents

* An ancient moralist maintained that prosperity was a much greater enemy to mankind than adversity. *Secundæ res acrioribus stimulis animos explorant;—miseriæ tolerantur, felicitate corrumpimur.* TAC.

without virtue. The licentious sensualist may, indeed, for the moment, fancy himself the true voluptuary—he may appear satisfied, and even delighted with his gratifications: but so does the voracious swine with his feast of garbage; nay, the sordid brute has the advantage—he has no apprehension to embitter his meal—he wants no internal satisfaction to give it a relish. But man is doomed, by the constitution of his nature, to be a stranger to true enjoyment, unless it be accompanied with the *approbation of his own mind*; and this, however callous the conscience may become, can never be the companion of vice. The virtuous man, on the contrary, has *that* within him which sweetens all his pleasures. He is not, as some suppose, debarred from any of the comforts of life. He rather thinks it his duty to enjoy them all, in their place and season. Virtue is not an austere, monkish system, of harsh severity and rigid mortification; neither does it in the least savour of the formal stiffness of puritanical affectation. It is, indeed, a system of self-government, and, whenever necessary, of self-denial. It often demands severe struggles. But it prescribes no rules which have not happiness for their object. It imposes no restraints which are not necessary to prevent misery. It requires no struggles which are not essential to safety. It abundantly compensates for the struggles which it occasions, for the prohibitions which it enjoins, by giving to all the pleasures of life a higher relish, and to all

the beauties of nature a brighter hue. Those enjoyments which, when illicitly obtained, are accompanied with the reproaches of conscience, and followed by the pangs of remorse, afford, when received at the hands of virtue, a pure and unalloyed, though, certainly (like all sensual enjoyments) an imperfect gratification. In fine, the virtuous man alone can bring to the banquet of life that frame of mind, without which no banquet can afford any real satisfaction; and, provided his virtue be founded upon Religion, his pleasure is heightened by knowing that he has pleasures in store, which will ensure him still higher and more permanent delight. The scene immediately before him is serene and unclouded, while the distant prospect opens still brighter views, and enlivens enjoyment by the ever cheering rays of hope.

But desirable, in every point of view, as this great moral change may be, it is so difficult of accomplishment, it is so strongly opposed by inveterate habits, that the proposal may seem to many to be absolutely chimerical. The task is, indeed, truly Herculean; so foul are the Augean stables of modern depravity. Yet, let it be remembered, that the object is indispensable—that nothing else can ensure the preservation of civil society—that nothing else can warrant a parent to look forward, without horror, to the future existence, even in this life, of those whose happiness is dearer to him than his

own—while the impressions and dispositions, which are necessary to produce such a change, would be the most effectual, perhaps the *only* preservative against speedy and general destruction ; they would give new energy to virtue, and enable it to cope with that energy of crime, which threatens to reduce the whole world to its dominion. In such a case, difficulty should only invigorate resolution, and stimulate to exertion. It should induce every one to set about the arduous task without delay—to form the fixed and unalterable determination—that the moral improvement of mankind—as far as he can, by any means, contribute to promote it—shall be the great business of his life.

Before, however, any one engages in this most arduous task, it behoves him seriously to consider how it may be accomplished. This precaution is necessary, not only to assist him in the discovering the means that may be effectual to the attainment of the desired object, if such means really exist, but also to secure him against resorting to such as may impede its pursuit. For the times abound with the most melancholy proofs, that, under the pretence of promoting the cause of virtue, and possibly, in some instances, with a sincere desire of aiding that cause, systems are industriously promulgated, which prove the most powerful auxiliaries ever yet employed in the service of vice.

Happily, in a case of such difficulty and such importance—in which success is so necessary, and in

which error may be so fatal—we are not without a guide, on whom we may safely rely with unlimited confidence. Means are provided by Heaven to conduct man to virtue and to happiness; and although, through a neglect of so great an advantage, he is deeply plunged in vice and misery, yet, so efficacious are those means, that, if rightly improved, they are able to rescue him from his present deplorable situation, and, by placing him in a state of moral improvement, to insure his felicity.

Of all the principles that can operate upon the human mind, the most powerful is—Religion. As a desire of happiness is the universal motive to action, Religion must infinitely exceed in strength all other motives, because it presents to the mind *eternal* happiness, or *eternal* misery, as the consequence of our actions. Every other consideration involves only interests which, however important, cannot survive the short period of the present life; but Religion opens to the view “the vast concerns of an eternal scene,” and stimulates to virtue, or deters from vice, by promises of endless felicity, as the reward of the former, and by threats of endless woe, as the punishment of the latter.

Religion is, therefore, the only principle of human conduct that can afford any solid security to virtue, any effectual preservative from vice. Every other principle may be counterbalanced by temporal motives. Ambition, avarice, sensual gratification, may press so strongly as to overpower all moral feeling,

all sense of duty. Hence it is that the universal voice of mankind, in all ages and countries—that the concurrent testimony of theory and experience—nay, that even the unwilling acknowledgements of infidels and atheists—have recognized the sacred truth, that Religion is the main pillar of society; that, without the belief of a Supreme Being, who will recompence every one according to his works—without the expectation of a future state of rewards and punishments—the motives to virtue would be so languid, the force of conscience would be so feeble, and the state of morals so corrupt, that Government would be unequal to the preservation of social order, and laws would be incapable of restraining the unruly passions of mankind. Hence, too, it is, that so many instances daily occur, both in public and private life, of a violation of trust, because men are selected, as the objects of confidence, who do not possess the only safe foundation of confidence—Religious principle; nay, sometimes, although their lives exhibit the most glaring proof that such principle has no influence upon their minds*. But when Religion is made a fixed and invariable rule

* Through inattention to considerations of this nature, a great corporation in the city of London, has lately lost the enormous sum of three hundred thousand pounds; and the unhappy individual, whose abuse of confidence occasioned this immense loss, is a melancholy proof, that neither a high reputation, a dread of disgrace and ruin, nor the fear of capital punishment, can, without Religious principle, afford any adequate security against temptation.

of action, then, and then only, can there be any real security for virtue; any solid ground for confidence. Then and then only does there exist a motive, fully adequate to the conquest of passion, and the resistance of temptation.

The importance and value of Religion do not, however, consist merely in its being the only effectual *motive* to virtue. This sacred principle must also be considered as the great, nay, the only authentic, moral instructor of mankind—the only sure standard of morality. Our state of dependence and responsibility implies an indispensable obligation of *obedience* to the Great Being, on whom we are dependent, and to whom we are responsible. A strict conformity to the will of that Being, as far as such will is known, is, therefore, at once, the great duty of Religion, and the very essence of virtue; and it is only in the school of Religion that sound morality can be learned.

Such being the power of Religion on the human mind, and such its efficacy in favour of virtue, it must be considered as affording the only remedy, to correct the depravity of the world. If this fail, our case is hopeless. If it be possible to deliver mankind from the dominion of vice, and to render them virtuous, it must be by the all-powerful influence of Religion, subjecting them to the authority of conscience, disposing their minds to study and obey the will of their Maker, and instructing them in that will, according to the various means by which it has pleased the

Almighty to reveal it. In all ages of the world, the light of what is called Natural Religion, aided by the moral sense, and uniform experience, has been sufficient to teach men their great moral duties; of which the concurrence of sentiment, which has generally prevailed on questions of moral obligation, affords ample proof. In all ages it might truly be said by every individual who quitted the paths of virtue, *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. But it is *our* inestimable privilege to possess the most complete, comprehensive, and explicit revelation of the Divine Will, that the most anxious solicitude for the temporal, or eternal happiness of man, could possibly desire. Such a revelation is Christianity;—a Religion, which, besides most graciously unfolding to our view, and bringing within the reach of our capacities, the wonderful scheme of Providence for the salvation of sinful men, instructs us most fully in all the duties of life, and enjoins a code of morality, the purity and perfection of which unequivocally evince its divine origin;—a Religion, the precepts of which, if piously observed, cannot fail to make good parents and good children, good husbands and good wives, good rulers and good subjects, good friends and good neighbours.—There is not, indeed, a quality, capable of conducing to individual happiness, or of benefiting society, the cultivation of which this Religion does not prescribe as a positive duty: there is not a vice to which human nature is liable,

which it does not prohibit as a crime, obnoxious to the Divine vengeance: there is not a situation in which man can be placed, but he may be sure of finding directions for his conduct in its sacred code: it provides the best possible security for rights, not by making them depend on the effect of imperious and repulsive demands, but by producing a disposition to respect them, without *any* demand—not by exciting men studiously to search for, and rigidly to insist on, whatever is due *to* them, but by inducing them conscientiously to consider, and spontaneously to perform, whatever is due *from* them: by guarding most effectually against sensuality and selfishness, it cuts off, at once, the two sources from which flow every vice, and every crime, that disturb the peace and comfort of human society; while, by ordaining a new duty, which is most admirably calculated to promote the performance of every other duty—by making *humility* an indispensable part of the Christian character, it supplies the *key stone*, without which the great moral arch, though perfect in all its other parts, would be miserably defective and dreadfully insecure; nay, more; this blessed Religion not only thus provides rules for the direction of social life, in every relation, it extends its salutary influence to situations, in which the social tie is apparently dissolved; situations in which it had always been supposed to be lawful to indulge hatred, and to gratify re-

venge. But the author of our Holy Religion ordains, that the principle of benevolence shall triumph over all our angry passions and resentful feelings. Knowing that disputes and contests would continue to exist, and from which the best men would not be exempt, He commands His followers to display a kind and affectionate disposition even towards those, against whom they might be obliged to contend; not, indeed, by neglecting any necessary means of defence and security, for that would only enable an unprincipled foe to effect their ruin, but by excluding from their hearts all rancour and acrimony; by being always ready to forgive injuries, and to terminate hostility; by loving, that is, by regarding with affection, even those, who might be endeavouring to do them all possible mischief. How worthy such precepts of a Religion revealed from Heaven, and designed to promote "peace on earth, and good will towards men!"

But the quality which principally distinguishes the Christian dispensation, considered as a code of moral regulation, and which demonstrates most fully its Divine origin, remains still to be noticed. Besides affording a perfect rule for human conduct, besides subjecting the feelings naturally excited by injurious treatment, or a state of hostility, to the principle of benevolence; that dispensation provides for the preservation of virtue, against the utmost influence of passion or temptation, by means which are infallible in their operation. For Christianity

teaches to regulate the DESIRES, as the only effectual way to regulate the conduct. But for that purpose it does not merely enjoin a determined and vigorous struggle with all irregular desires; it goes still deeper into the moral structure of man, it ascends still higher into the operation of first causes, by endeavouring to preserve its followers for the necessity and the danger of such a struggle. Thought being an inlet to desire, it sets a strict, and ever vigilant guard, upon the thoughts. It requires purity of mind as the grand preservative of purity of heart; it excludes improper ideas as the most sure and easy way to exclude desires, the encouragement of which would be highly criminal and inexpressibly dangerous.

To those who are in the habits of vicious indulgence, this system of *mental regulation* may seem visionary and impracticable. But the reason of such persons is blinded by their passions, the dominion of which, because they have been accustomed to yield to it, they think invincible, and a submission to which they, in consequence, consider as justifiable. But they are little aware of the authority which every one is capable of acquiring over himself, or of the wonderful effects, in point of self-government, which resolution is capable of producing. On this subject many unenlightened heathens might give them very salutary lessons, Socrates, who, though aided by philosophy, was destitute of the incomparably superior advantages of

Revelation, who saw no more of the most powerful incentive to virtue, the prospect of a future state, than he was able to discover in the works of nature, subdued his disposition in such a manner, and obtained so absolute a command over himself, that his friends would not believe, until confirmed by his own mouth, the description given him by a physiognomist, who declared him to be *naturally violent and vicious*. But history abounds with instances of self-command, produced, without the aid of philosophy, by the influence of idolatrous Religion, and which ought to put us Christians to the blush. The abstinence of the Hindoos from animal food, a sacrifice founded in Religious principle, is so conscientiously observed, that these people will rather perish by famine, than prolong their lives by a breach of what, in that respect, they conceive to be their Religious duty ; and hundreds of thousands of these people have, in consequence, fallen victims to a scarcity of rice, their chief article of subsistence, when an abundance of other kinds of food was within their reach. Among the same people many a widow, in compliance with the dictates of her Religion, has ascended the funeral pile, with unshaken constancy and undisturbed serenity, hoping thereby to ensure a happy re-union to her deceased husband in another world *.

* In a publication, entitled " An Account of an Embassy to the Court of Teshoo Lama, in Tibet, by Captain Samuel Turner, is contained the narrative of a case of self-imposed mortifica-

If the obscure notion of a Deity, if the faint and precarious views of a future state, if the slender

tion on the part of an Hindoo devotee, which affords a most remarkable proof of the power which the mind, under the influence of Religious principles, is capable of acquiring over the body. The devotee in question is related to have commenced, early in life, a series of almost incredible mortifications, by the complete performance of a Religious vow, to continue perpetually on his legs, and neither to sit down upon the ground, nor to lie down to rest, for the space of twelve years. Having accustomed himself to sleep standing, by being for a while tied with ropes to a tree or post, during the time of repose, and the complete term of his penance being expired, he next bound himself to hold his hands locked in each other over his head, for the like space of twelve years. In this situation he travelled over the greater part of the continent of Asia, and, when eleven years of the above term were expired, the author saw him, riding upon a horse, accompanied by two attendants who assisted him in mounting and alighting from his beast. The circulation of the blood seemed to have entirely forsaken his arms, which were withered, void of sensation and inflexible: though he spoke with confidence of recovering the use of them, when, upon the expiration of his penance, he should be at liberty to take them down. These instances of severe mortification are not here noticed, for the purpose of conveying any approbation of such severity. On the contrary, they ought to be considered as an unwarrantable abuse of that power, which is given us over our bodies, and which should be rather employed in rendering them subservient to the uses and duties of life. But they may be found, nevertheless, to convey a wholesome reproof to those Christians who cannot summon sufficient resolution to restrain their passions and to regulate their wills, in obedience to the plain, easy, and salutary injunctions of their Divine Master, *whose yoke indeed is easy, and whose burden light.*

motives to self denial, which are afforded by the glimmerings of such a Religion, are capable of producing such effects, what ought to be the effect of that full Revelation, which the Almighty has been pleased to make of Himself in the Christian Dispensation? of that clear prospect, which is thereby declared of a life to come? and of that perfect rule of obedience, which is therein contained? How unpardonable must it be in us, to omit any thing that is required, or to do any thing that is prohibited, by that comprehensive, clear, and express communication of the Divine Will, which is thus most graciously vouchsafed unto us. By that Will nothing is enjoined, which reason does not concur in proving to be conducive, nay, essential, even to our temporal felicity; we are thereby prohibited from nothing, which would not be actually hurtful to us, and lead to our present, as well as our future misery; and the whole practical system of virtue, which we are thereby commanded to observe, is eminently calculated both for general and individual happiness. We are required, indeed, to obtain, not merely an entire command over our actions, but an absolute dominion over our wills, and to regulate our dispositions and our thoughts. But all this, as has been shewn, difficult as it may appear, is, in fact, according to the constitution of our nature, the most easy, nay, the only efficacious method, of rendering virtue habitual; and if we neglect the means, so clearly pointed out, whereby we

may attain the state, in which, alone, true happiness can be found, the poor Heathens, who have made such astonishing sacrifices, and undergone such exquisite sufferings, in order to appease the wrath and to obtain the favour of their imaginary Gods, will surely rise up for our condemnation.

Possessing such advantages for the knowledge and performance of their duty to God and man—such aids for the discovery and attainment of true happiness—the Regions which are thus favoured, might reasonably be expected to prove the distinguished abode of piety and virtue. But, alas ! far from this being the case, there is too much reason to conclude, that the far greater part of the population of those Countries live in the habitual practice of vices, against which the Divine displeasure is most positively denounced—in a state of indifference, approaching to contempt, for their Holy Religion—and in the utter neglect even of its external forms. In this latter respect also, the conduct of the Heathen most severely reproaches modern Christians. The former, though superstitious in their worship, and vicious in their practice, have generally displayed a profound reverence for their Religion, and have observed its rites and ceremonies with the most scrupulous attention. What a striking contrast is such conduct, to that which generally prevails in the Christian world ! If a Pagan were told of the millions in this Country, who have no sense whatever of Religion and no reverence for it ; who never

engage in any kind of worship, public or private, and never pronounce the name of God—but to profane it; if among those who make an outward profession of Religion, he were informed how very small a portion of time is devoted, by far the greater number, to the public worship of God, how many are satisfied with a single attendance in a week on divine service, and, except during the hour and half thus employed, how many, there is reason to fear, never bend the knee before their Maker; if, moreover, he could witness the inattention and levity which are often displayed during the most sacred solemnities, and which prove the heart to be a stranger to devotion; if a Pagan were told of all this, would he not look down upon us as little better than a nation of Atheists? or, rather, would he not consider such gross profanation of a Religion, which we profess to venerate as an immediate Revelation from the Deity, as worse than even Atheism itself?

That such a description is applicable even to this Country, no one, who observes the state of Religion and morals among us, can hesitate to admit. But the rest of the world, which is denominated Christian, is plunged still deeper in the horrid gloom of impiety and vice. In scarcely any Country but this, do the rays of pure and vital Christianity maintain any contest with the thick mists of irreligion, infidelity, and immorality, which threaten to bury the world in total darkness. Throughout

the rest of Christendom, these implacable enemies to God and man seem to be triumphant. Morals are in a state of complete corruption; infidel principles are formally avowed and inculcated; and that inestimable privilege—the Christian Dispensation, reduced to a mere empty form, or employed as an engine of State policy, is openly and successfully attacked by its enemies, or, still more grossly insulted, by the profligate lives of its professors.

So corrupt a state is at once an awful proof, and a most lamentable consequence, of the defective influence of Christianity—of the little improvement which has been made—or rather of the gross neglect, with which the Christian world is chargeable—of this invaluable blessing. It is true, indeed, that this blessing has had a most salutary influence on the general state of society, by enlightening the minds of men with a knowledge of the true Religion; by inspiring sentiments of reverence for virtue and of detestation for vice; by teaching a perfect system of morality; by displaying, in the person of the Divine Founder of our Religion, a pattern of absolute perfection; and by exhibiting, in the character of its eminently worthy professors, numerous and bright examples, formed, as far as human imperfection would allow, upon that Great and Illustrious Model. It has also operated, in a most beneficial manner, on the institutions of Society; it has contributed greatly to the improvement of Law and to the purifying of the Adminis-

tration of Justice ; although, in individual practice, in controuling the passions of men, it has had so little effect, compared with that which it ought to have produced, it has nevertheless established, in the human breast, an authentic, and, until modern lights had bewildered the human mind, a generally acknowledged standard of all moral and social excellence. In this Country it has materially conduced to that admirable constitution, which has long been the wonder and the envy of the world ; and, as an essential part of that constitution, it has established a pure and primitive form of public worship, which breathes the genuine spirit of Christianity ; the unrivalled excellence of which is generally admitted ; and which is most admirably calculated to preserve that Christian Unity, which the apostolical founders of the Christian Church have most solemnly enjoined, considering it as indispensably necessary to secure the benefits of Christianity to its professors.

These salutary effects, however, afford a proof, rather of the transcendant excellence, than of the due improvement of the Christian dispensation. Instead, indeed, of such improvement, the most dreadful neglect, or rather the grossest abuse of this most high and valuable privilege, has long been glaringly manifest, in the vicious and irreligious state of the Christian world.—At length, by engaging in an open rebellion against the Most High, under the impious standard of modern infidelity ;

by encouraging, under the specious name of philosophy, a daring and systematic attack on all the rules of Christian morality; and by surrendering itself to the no less pernicious and perfectly sympathetic influence of boundless luxury and vicious gratification; *that* world has arrived at a stage of such extreme profligacy, that no one can be at a loss to account for the commotions and dangers, which seem to menace with destruction whatever is dear and valuable in social life. But although the profligacy of the Nations, which thus disgrace their Christian profession, has been productive of such direful effects, it is very far from making a suitable impression, even on virtuous minds. Accustomed to look upon human nature as depraved, and the world, in all ages, as sunk in vice, those minds do not sufficiently consider the great moral improvement, which, every allowance being made for human imperfection, seems naturally, and, but for the proofs to the contrary, necessarily, to result from such a dispensation as Christianity. They therefore do not feel, as they ought, the excessive wickedness, inseparable from the abuse of such a dispensation. Gratified, moreover, by those instances of fervent piety and eminent virtue, which really exist, and which they love to contemplate—and too fondly, perhaps, indulging the hope, that such instances, few as they *comparatively* are, will be allowed to plead for general preservation—they willingly turn from that mass of im-

piety and vice which so wonderfully preponderates; while their habits of life, happily for their own peace of mind, preclude them from observing the enormous magnitude and the shocking grossness of that mass*. Hence it is that persons of the above description, who are ever disposed to judge charitably, rather than justly of mankind, not only form much too favourable an opinion of the world, but are far less shocked than they ought to be, at the wickedness which they know to exist; and hence too, unhappily, they acquiesce in so much wickedness, as an unavoidable evil, and refrain from raising their voice, and calling forth their exertions, as they might do, to discountenance and restrain it. The same causes have contributed to conceal from their notice the rapid advances of moral corruption in *modern* times; and they are, accordingly, little aware of the accumulated mischief, already produced by the combined operation of that excessive luxury, which inflames the passions to the highest pitch, and of those systems of infidelity and false philosophy, which release the passions, so inflamed, from all restraint; and which are particularly directed against

* The active members of the Society for the Suppression of Vice would probably acknowledge, painful as the acknowledgement must prove, that though informed by the public communications, as well as animated by the example, of the Proclamation Society, yet, till engaged in their laudable undertaking, they had no conception that their country was so depraved as they find it to be.

the faith and the principles, inculcated by Infinite Wisdom itself, in the Christian dispensation.

How shall we account for this lamentable—this almost total—failure of Christianity to produce those salutary effects, which might reasonably have been expected from it? How does it happen that a system at once so pure and perfect, and so obviously conducive to present, as well as future happiness; a system which affords such facility to the practice of virtue, by teaching the regulation of the first springs of action—desires and thoughts, and the formation of dispositions and habits which would render the very contemplation of vice painful; a system which presents to the mind such powerful motives of action, by exhibiting the clearest views of the will of our Maker and of a future state—accompanied with the most stupendous display of Divine goodness in providing, and in bringing within the reach of our faculties, that great scheme of our salvation, which ought to fill every heart that contemplates it with unutterable gratitude; how does it happen that such a system has failed—not merely to render piety and virtue the ruling principles of human conduct, but—to preserve mankind from such a state of irreligion as would excite the horror even of heathens, and from such a state of depravity as endangers the loss of all social blessing?

The true cause of this failure, no less wonderful than deplorable, may easily be discovered. According to the

constitution of human nature, education is the appointed means by which all Religious and moral advantages are to be improved. Whoever observes the order of things in this world, must be convinced of the truth, on a due attention to which depends chiefly the happiness of mankind—that it is the business of education to *train up a child in the way that he should go*, in order to prepare and qualify him for a life of Religion and virtue. Every one's experience must convince him that first impressions are the most lasting; that the notions, which are originally formed upon any subject, have a great and, generally, a decisive influence upon all subsequent views of it; and that the associations of thought and of feeling, which are established in early life, are scarcely ever to be entirely dissolved. In short, it is too obvious to require illustration, that youth is the seed time of life, and that upon the *nature* of the seed, which is then sown, depends *that* of the future harvest. It is therefore in early life, when the mind is tender, and the heart susceptible, that Religious impressions must be made, and Religious feelings excited, in order to secure their influence upon the human character and conduct. Every one, indeed, being possessed of moral feelings and of a knowledge of his duty, is justly responsible for his conduct. But it is education alone that can enable good principles to take such deep root, and good dispositions and habits to acquire such an ascendancy, as may be sure to give

effect to moral feeling and to a sense of duty. The due influence of Christianity upon the human mind depends, therefore, most materially, upon education; the great object of which, in Christian countries, should be to promote and establish that sacred influence. But such is the neglect which prevails, and has long prevailed, to render education subservient to this its great object, as to preclude all wonder at the depravity of the world. It seems, indeed, as if the term education were generally understood to mean no more than such a cultivation of the mental faculties, as may qualify the individual for an allotted station of life. Accordingly, the education of man, in its most refined sense, has been principally, and, indeed, almost solely directed to the formation of his mind, for the purposes of literary instruction and scientific attainments: objects undoubtedly of high importance, and which, it is hoped, will continue to be pursued with undiminished ardour, but which are absolutely insignificant when compared with the far nobler and higher purpose of education, the cultivation of the *heart*—out of which proceed the issues of life; a purpose to be effected only by implanting Religious principles, by inculcating Religious sentiments, and by forming virtuous dispositions and habits. Taht object this is most woefully overlooked, a very cursory view of the state and effects of education, even in this country, must convince the most incredulous. Instead of being thoroughly grounded in the principles, the precepts, and the doctrines of Chris-

tianity, how ignorant are young persons, in general, suffered to remain, even of the proofs of that great and marvellous transaction, the belief of which is essential to their salvation ! How rarely are they made acquainted with those clear evidences, by which the truth of Christianity is established with a greater degree of certainty, than belongs to historical events that have never been disputed—and which would impregnably fortify their minds against all the attacks of scepticism and infidelity ! While a taste for science and art is cultivated (and properly too) with the utmost care, how little are they taught to prize *that* knowledge, which contains the muniments of their heavenly inheritance ! Nay, how vague and superficial are the notions, which they are generally taught to form, of the nature and attributes of that Great and Gracious Being, who is infinitely perfect and excellent—and the contemplation of which is so admirably calculated to expand the heart ; and to dispose it to piety and virtue ! How devoid of reverence for the Majesty of Heaven is the youthful mind suffered to remain !* How little is the youthful heart taught to glow with gratitude and affection for the universal Benefactor, whose kindness is manifest in all his works, and whom to love, with all

* This lamentable neglect to impress the youthful mind with sentiments of reverence for the Deity, must be considered as the primary cause of the shocking insensibility—of the profane levity—which so generally accompany that most awful ceremony—*the administration of an oath.*

our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, is the first principle of our Religion, the great duty of our lives, and the chief end of our being ! In short, how little care is taken to impress, on the tender mind, that grand incentive to virtue—that most powerful preservative from vice—a strong and lively sense, that He who created us, though visible only in his works, is every where present—that He knows the secrets of all hearts—that neither action nor thought can escape His all-searching eye—and that He will certainly bring us to judgment, and reward or punish us eternally, as we shall have improved, or abused, our means of knowing and obeying His will.

A most interesting controversy has recently taken place on the important question—whether Religion is sufficiently attended to in the public schools of this country ? The result of this controversy seems to be, that, at those schools, much provision is made to render education Religious ; but that such provision is most lamentably deficient in point of effect. This deficiency is owing, in a great degree, to a cause which has been but little noticed. It may be ascribed much more to the habits and dispositions, which youth bring with them from home, than to any neglect or omission at school. Whoever considers the luxurious and dissipated manners, which prevail in most great and wealthy families ; the rage for amusement, which has nearly extinguished all fondness for domestic life ; the

the little attention which, of course, parents are disposed or even able to bestow on their children, who are consequently left to the care of mercenaries ; the almost total disuse of family devotion ; the great neglect even of public worship ; the open profanation of the Sabbath ; the indifference which is displayed for Religion ; whoever duly considers these things, cannot think it surprising that children, who pass from the observation of such examples, and the participation in such manners, to a public school, should regard the Religious exercises in which they are there required to join, as mere forms, or, rather, as irksome ceremonies, and that their hearts should be exceedingly indisposed to sentiments of piety and devotion. The *prima malitiae* seems, therefore, to be the corruption of domestic manners and habits, whereby the youthful mind is contaminated, and its subsequent culture is rendered ineffectual to the production of salutary fruit. Nor should it be forgotten that parents, besides exhibiting to their children, while at home, the most pernicious examples, and enuring them to the most hurtful indulgencies, send their children to school with such a profusion of money, that the preservation of good order and discipline in our seminaries of education, is rendered a most difficult task, and those seminaries often become scenes of luxury, dissipation, and intemperance ! Not satisfied, however, with counteracting the effects of Religious instruction at school, many parents seem

studious to interrupt such instruction, by selecting Sunday for the purpose of there visiting their children, or for taking them out upon parties of pleasure.

Who, that considers our natural propensity to evil, and the indispensable necessity that is thereby induced, of assiduously forming the mind, in earliest life, to Religion and virtue, can wonder that life, if commenced in the manner above described; should be marked throughout by irreligion and vice ! Who can wonder that Legislators, who are so educated, should overlook the great paramount maxim of sound policy—*that the Religion and morals of a country are its dearest interests*; involving, besides their influence on the individual happiness, temporal and eternal, of its inhabitants—its political welfare ! its national strength and security—Who can wonder that those Legislators should be unwilling to frame laws for the restraint of vices, which they are taught betimes to view with an indulgent eye, and from a participation in which their education affords them no security. Hence may be found the true cause of that awful phenomenon, with regard to the moral state and the political safety of this country, which occurred in the last Parliament, when the assiduous endeavours of some of the wisest, as well as most virtuous men in both Houses, to procure a law for the restraint of the most pernicious vice that can infest society—the prevailing, the increasing, and the unrestrained vice of

adultery—were frustrated by the vote of a considerable majority of the House of Commons ! A still worse symptom, in relation to this subject, has, however, since appeared. A great law officer of the Crown, convinced of the indispensable necessity of such a law, and not suffering himself to be disheartened by the failure of repeated attempts to procure it, pledged himself, in two successive sessions, to bring forward another Bill for that purpose*. But finding, upon further observation, the disposition of the House to be such, as would not only frustrate his endeavours, but as might also render even the discussion of the subject, IN THE LEGISLATURE OF A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY, favourable to the vice which called so loudly for correction, he has thought it advisable to abandon his purpose, and to forfeit his pledges. With such reason to fear that our profligacy, gross as it is, is also incorrigible, what title have we to expect the protection of Providence in this hour of extreme peril ? or, at least, what pretensions should we have to hope for such protection, if we were, in just punishment for our vices, to be deprived of that truly Christian King, who seems *alone* to stand between us and the avenging Angel ?

As the want of Religious education is the true cause that Christianity has failed to produce those salutary effects, with regard to morals, which seem

* See a “ letter to the Honourable Spencer Perceval in consequence of the notice given by him that he would bring forward a Bill for the punishment of the crime of adultery.”

naturally to result from it ; it follows, that in order to bring about a reformation of morals, education must be rendered subservient to its main object—the establishment of the sacred and purifying influence of Christianity. This blessed Religion is, by the ordinance of Heaven, the appointed Guide of human conduct, and it is indisputably certain that, in proportion as men submit themselves to its direction, they will be virtuous and happy. But in order to establish its ascendancy over their minds, it must, by means of education, be made the Guide of their youth. And here, alas ! a difficulty, which, at first view, threatens to be insurmountable, presents itself. The young are educated by those of mature age ; and these, who should instruct by precept, and lead by example, are themselves, for the most part, uninstructed and vicious. This is particularly the case with regard to those, on whom the most important, because the *first* part of the duty of Religious education devolves. That duty, we have seen, must be very imperfectly and ineffectually performed, even with the greatest possible advantages, *at school*, unless it be begun, and even advanced, *at home*. Teachers will have little chance of producing a sense of Religion, if parents have neglected the precious, the invaluable opportunity, of making Religious impressions on the mind, when it is most tender ; and of exciting Religious sentiments and affections in the heart, when, softened by the endearments of pa-

rental fondness, it is most susceptible. But among parents, how few, comparatively speaking, are at all aware of the value of such an opportunity; how few are disposed, how many are even incompetent, to improve it! Among the most numerous part of society, the labouring classes, how lamentably insensible are the far greater part of the necessity of Religious education, and how deplorably destitute are their children of Religious instruction! Surely this is an evil which calls for an immediate remedy; surely the Legislature ought to supply that remedy, by providing effectual means, that the children of the poor may be brought up in the habit of regular attendance on the Established Worship*; with sufficient instruction to enable them to understand, and to join in that Worship. Thus the morals of those classes would be gradually ameliorated, and, in another generation, they would be better disposed and qualified to perform the Religious duties of parents.

* I say here "the Established Worship;" for though all kinds of Worship are, and ought to be, tolerated and protected, it would be a paradox, that modern liberality itself would be unable to solve, for the Legislature, one of whose most important duties is the care of the Established Church, to lend itself to patronize and promote any other modes of Worship, than those of that Church. Such a paradox is, however, in this age of liberality, to be found in an existing Act of Parliament, founded upon a Bill brought in by Sir Robert Peel, Baronet.

Of all the errors, which lead to social infelicity, scarcely any one is more mischievous than that, so long and so generally prevalent, of supposing that education is not a State concern. If there be any one of the duties of Government more important than all the rest, it is surely that of preparing the rising generation for the important station of Members of Society. To the neglect of this duty, most of the evils which the world is now suffering, may, in a great degree, be attributed. Vain must prove the utmost endeavours, on the part of Government, to make the Nation under its care prosperous and happy, if it neglect the means, which are in its power, to render its subjects virtuous, by training them up in the knowledge* and practice of their Religious and Moral Duties. To sustain fleets and armies for the security of the State, to raise taxes for its defence, to enact laws for the punishment of criminals, and for the protection of persons and property, while education is left to take its chance, is a folly no less preposterous, than it would be to preserve, with great expense and care, the fences of an enclosure—to guard it against “the boar out of the wood” and “the wild beast of the forest—” while the tender plants, on which depend the hopes of the year, are perishing from want of attention;

* The folly and the mischievous consequences of this omission are displayed, in a masterly manner, by M. Gentz, late *Conseiller de Guerre* at Berlin, in a work entitled *Journal Historique*; and noticed, as it deserves, in the *Mercure Britannique* of the late M. Mallet du Pan.

while they are suffered to be choked by luxuriant weeds, or ravaged by destructive vermin.

The *immediate* interference of Government, with regard to Religious education, must, however, be confined principally to those classes, which have not the means of providing such education for their children. In other respects, Government can do little more than prevent education from becoming, what it too often is, actually *noxious*, and guard it against those abuses, the toleration of which, so detrimental are they to the publick interests, nothing can justify. For, strange to tell, education is sometimes made the means of promoting an indifference for the obligations of Religion and morality, of producing a contempt for the sanctions of law and the authority of government, and of depriving the established Worship of that respect, to which all the institutions of a country—and particularly so excellent a one as the established Worship of this country—are entitled.

But in order to secure the benefits of Religious education to the lower classes, it is necessary to afford their morals much more protection, than they at present enjoy. Destitute of the advantages of liberal instruction, they cannot be expected to possess those powers of reflection, which, by tracing the connection between vice and misery, give firmness and resolution to virtue. They stand in need, therefore, of all the protection which law can afford, to preserve them from being assailed by

temptation. But such, alas! is the almost defenceless state in which the morals of this valuable and interesting part of the community are suffered to remain, that it is wonderful how those persons, to whom belongs the important duty of supplying the lamentable deficiency, can, without the most restless anxiety, lay their heads on their pillows. In three respects particularly, this important subject calls loudly for the instant attention of the Legislator and the Magistrate. That a due observance of the Lord's Day is essential to the very existence of Religious sentiment in a Christian Country, is a truth too obvious to be here insisted on. Sensible of this truth, our ancestors thought it their duty to provide, by salutary laws, against the violation of that sacred Day. But in consequence, partly of the inadequacy of those laws to their object, in these dissolute and irreverent times, and partly of their imperfect execution, the profanation of the Sabbath is, within a few years, become so gross and so prevalent, that the lower orders seem to regard that day with absolute indifference, and to consider themselves free from all obligation, either Divine or human, to shew it even an outward respect.—In the next place, the prodigious number of public houses in this Country, exceeding, beyond all calculation, the utmost bounds of necessity or utility, and the irregularities thereby unavoidably produced, are so obviously and so deeply injurious to the morals of the lower classes, as to preclude the necessity of even a single observa-

or the best interests of Society, will surely exert his
 tion on that subject.—But an evil remains to be no-
 ticed, of the extent of which no language can
 furnish an adequate description. In every part of
 the kingdom, and particularly in the Metropolis, the
 poorer classes are incessantly tempted, under the au-
 thority of Law, to destroy their own health and
 morals, by the deleterious practice of drinking spiri-
 tuous liquors; a practice which, by giving an agreeable
 impulse to the animal spirits, and by producing a
 temporary suspension of care and anxiety, soon
 creates a propensity too powerful to be resisted,
 without a much stronger apprehension of conse-
 quences, than can be expected from those who oc-
 cupy the lower walks of life; but which, if not resisted,
 is sure to become one of the most imperious and in-
 vincible habits, that human nature is capable of
 forming. But who can adequately describe the in-
 juries, occasioned by this practice, to millions of ra-
 tional, and, consequently of immortal beings—by
 plunging them into the utmost excesses of vice and
 debauchery; by degrading their character far below
 the brutes; and by reducing them to a state of penury
 and hopeless disease. What a scope for feeling and
 humanity does this awful subject afford! When a dis-
 covery was lately made, which opened a prospect of ex-
 tirpating a malignant disease, and thereby of snatching
 multitudes from a premature death; the public instant-
 ly displayed all that ardour—for which, in generous ex-
 ertion, this Country is so distinguished—to give effect

to the benevolent scheme. But what is the benevolence of stopping the ravages of a natural disorder, compared with *that* of preventing the maladies produced by vice. As much as the soul is more valuable than the body, in the same degree, surely, is it more compassionate, to prevent man from sacrificing his own life by wickedness and debauchery, than to protect that life, at most but a few years, against the stroke of death, the dread of which is one of the most powerful preservatives from immorality. These inexpressibly important considerations have, however, been lost sight of, in an attention to sordid, and, in reality, most erroneous calculations of Finance. In order to provide annually some thousands of revenue, millions upon millions of which would, at such a price, be infinitely too dearly purchased, the labouring part of the community have been tempted to drink a baneful poison, which has corrupted the morals, and consigned to a premature grave, the greater part of those who have not withstood the temptation. And at length the evil is so incorporated with habit, and so closely interwoven with a variety of interests, public and private, in themselves undoubtedly of great importance, that its *gradual* correction is the utmost, that a due attention to the dictates of sound prudence can authorize us to attempt. But to produce such a correction, with the greatest degree of practicable effect and prudent celerity, every one who has a due solicitude for the happiness of individuals,

utmost endeavours ; for until something be done towards the attainment of this important object, it would be preposterous to hope for any considerable amelioration of the morals of the lower classes*.

With regard to the higher and the middle classes, the important duty of providing for the Religious education of their children, must, subject to a restriction of the above-mentioned abuses, be left to themselves. But here, and particularly among the former, where on account of the great influence of rank and station this duty is abundantly most important, the impulse which can alone lead to its performance—a sense of Religion—is dreadfully deficient. That impulse which, on the part of parents, seems essential to the existence of Religious education, can itself, in the *ordinary* course of things, be produced only by such education. But, unless the human heart be impenetrably callous, the present times abound with *extraordinary* means of producing such an impulse. The seeds of vice and irreligion, which have been so profusely sown in the soil, destined for the reception of the good seed of the Gospel, and the growth of which, in modern

* There is another subject which, on account of its close connection with the morals of these classes, calls for the most serious consideration. It is an awful truth that of the *enormous* sum, which is annually raised in this country for the support of the poor, the far greater part is applied in such a manner, that it operates as a premium to idleness, and consequently to vice.

times, has been rendered so luxuriant, by the overflowing streams of infidelity, false philosophy, and luxury, have, at length, yielded their natural product—an abundant harvest of calamity, public as well as private. The convulsions which have shaken society to its foundations, and the extreme peril to which every thing valuable in human life is now exposed, (the natural effects of the above causes,) must, doubtless, convince every mind that Religion is essential to social security, and dispose every heart to flee to that only refuge in seasons of deep distress, and impending danger. The voice of all history, indeed, proclaims aloud, that great moral depravity has ever been the forerunner of commotion and revolution. But the guilt of those nations, which, heretofore, thus brought down upon their heads the vengeance of moral justice, was not aggravated, like ours, by the abuse of so high a privilege, of so great a blessing, as—Christianity. No wonder, then, that, in consequence of such an abuse, the convulsions of the present time should affect more deeply, than those of any former period, all the interests of social life.—No wonder that they threaten a more wide and general ruin, than any which has overtaken the world since the deluge. Indeed the events of this wonderful time are of so astonishing a nature, and of so uncommon a magnitude—they tend obviously to consequences so vast and tremendous—and they have been brought about by means which seemed so inadequate to the pro-

duction of such stupendous effects, and which, in their operation, have so completely violated all rules of probability and baffled all power of calculation—that it is scarcely possible to doubt that the Almighty Sovereign of the universe is now interposing, in an especial and extraordinary manner, for the punishment and correction of guilty man.

To suppose that such events can happen without the immediate agency of a superintending Providence, would be almost to presume that the Ruler of Heaven takes no concern in the government of the earth. Without, indeed, the reflection, that the Deity is now especially interfering in the affairs of the world, for purposes known only to Himself, but which we may with certainty conclude to be ultimately directed to the welfare of His creatures, it would be beyond human fortitude to support the scenes which excite sensibility, or to endure the prospects which embitter expectation.—But while we find relief, and even consolation, in the thought, that we are in the hands of Him who can say to the desolating torrent, *thus far shalt thou go, but no farther*, it is impossible to say to what extent His justice, nay, perhaps, His goodness, may require the punishment of those who now inhabit the earth. If, as there seems abundant reason to conclude, he be now displaying, in a signal manner, His vengeance against a guilty world; if He be vindicating His laws, which have been broken, and His Religion which has been contemned; if He be inflicting His fatherly

chastisement for the correction and amendment, of His disobedient children; we may be sure, that His present awful dispensations will be adequate to the accomplishment of the end designed. But how far, both in severity and duration, they are to be carried, before they answer their intended purpose, is a consideration which, at all events, must inspire us with dread, but which is peculiarly calculated to excite alarm, if we reflect on their failure, hitherto, to produce any material effect. This is, perhaps, the most awful symptom attending our situation. Already has the visitation lasted thirteen years—already has it laid in ruins half the establishments of the civilized world, and convulsed all society to its foundations—already has it produced carnage, and desolation, and anarchy, not to be equalled in the history of the world—and yet mankind do not seem to be roused; luxury and dissipation have experienced no abatement; and vice has not slackened her career. If this statement were not confirmed by the evidence of our senses, it could not gain the smallest degree of credit. It would seem absolutely impossible that such signal marks of Divine displeasure, as are displayed in the present state of the social world, should fail to impress the human mind with the most serious alarm, to work an instant change in the manners of society, and to fill the Churches with devout and earnest supplicants, of every rank and con-

dition, imploring Heaven to suspend its vengeance, and vowing, with the deepest contrition, to seek its favour, by a thorough amendment of heart and life. But, alas! no such propitious symptoms as yet appear. Nay, it is impossible to discover *any* symptoms, which indicate that mankind are even aware of their real situation.

It is true, Great Britain, though guilty of abusing advantages with which no other Country has been favoured, is not yet arrived at that state of gross depravity, in which the rest of Christendom seems to be plunged. Notwithstanding the awful symptoms, which too plainly declare that we are fast approaching to such a state, we still retain among us a portion of Religious and moral excellence, which, if roused into active exertion, in the cause of Religion and virtue, and aided by the great, but, *as to that cause*, long dormant powers of Legislation, might authorize us to hope that we may yet be preserved. To this difference, between us and the people of other Countries, may be ascribed our preservation, thus far, amidst dangers unexampled in our history, and during a contest which has reduced the rest of Europe to a state, either of abject slavery, or of base dependence on the will of a rapacious conqueror. While the continental Nations are groaning beneath the rod—or endeavouring, by submission and compliances, to avert the wrath—of the most ferocious and unprincipled tyrant, ever employed by Heaven to

scourge mankind, Great Britain maintains her independence and her honour, and, after the most arduous exertions in the general cause, she now sustains, with undaunted fortitude, and with undismayed spirit, a most arduous contest for her own existence. So distinguishing a proof of Divine favour, though it loudly calls for our gratitude on account of the past, is not, however, *at least, not without a great change among ourselves*, calculated to inspire us with confidence in regard to the future. Difficulties and dangers, never before experienced, surround us, and in proportion as we advance, the prospect becomes more gloomy and discouraging. Till now it has always been possible, in the greatest perils, to conjecture the worst that was likely to happen. But should our enemy, by any overwhelming effort of his unprecedented force, or, which is much less improbable, by the far more formidable experiment of protracted warfare, be *permitted* to prevail against us, what imagination can conceive the horrors and the ruin which must then ensue? All the miseries which the most unfortunate parts of Europe have suffered, since the revolutionary explosion, would be but a slight foretaste of those which, in such a case, would be in store for us. Selfishness can now no longer command the base consolation, with which those, who were capable of deriving comfort from such a thought, have hitherto been able to console themselves in the most distress-

ing and perilous periods—and by a false reliance on which they have till this moment been lulled into a fatal apathy—that the existing order of things would certainly *last their time*.

Still, however, according to the most enlarged, and the most favourable view, which our limited vision can form of our situation, there is abundant reason to conclude that our fate depends upon ourselves. Upon the supposition that the Ruler of the Universe is now interposing, in an especial manner, in the affairs of a sinful world—a supposition, which is not only warranted by the many instances of such interposition, recorded in Holy Writ, but which seems fully authorized by the notorious profligacy, and the extraordinary events of the times—the only rational conjecture, which is suggested by a comparison of our situation with that of other countries, is, that *because* we are far less advanced than they in depravity, an opportunity is graciously afforded us to correct the impiety and the vices, by which we *undoubtedly merit* the Divine vengeance. This opportunity, with grief and shame be it said, has not yet been improved. But, unless it be improved, and that speedily, it would be presumption to indulge a hope that we shall not receive the just reward of such base ingratitude. That we deserve the chastisement of Heaven, it is impossible to deny. That such chastisement is about to be inflicted, nay, that it is already begun, every appearance denotes. Should it fail to produce its due effect, the righteous doom of

an impenitent and an incorrigible people must, sooner or later, and God only knows how soon, attend us. What course have we then to pursue, but to endeavour, by sincere repentance, by deep humiliation, and by a thorough amendment, to conciliate the favour of that All-powerful Being, who, like an affectionate father, corrects in love, and punishes in mercy; and *thus* to seek what, happily, we have reason to hope we may yet obtain, the aid of an Almighty arm?

Let then the awful warning which, from all sides, is now sounded in our ears, excite us to the most serious reflection;—let the severe chastisement, with which we are now visited, inspire us with heartfelt compunction for the impiety and the vices, which have drawn down such judgments on our heads, and make us to loathe, and for ever to abjure, those irreligious systems, and those immoral practices, which have been suffered to acquire so dreadful an ascendancy; let us determine, with unalterable resolution, to adhere to that Holy Religion, which is given us as the rule of our faith and conduct, and as the unerring standard of our principles; let us, by means of education, render *that* Religion an object of early veneration and attachment, and, by thus establishing its empire in the youthful heart secure its influence in society;—then may we hope that this night of blackness, and tempest, and horror, will be followed by a bright and glorious day—then may we hope, not merely to be ourselves preserved, but, by setting

an example of reformation, to become the means of rescuing, from impending destruction, the whole civilized world; the preservation of which depends in all appearance, on the triumph of this Country over vice, revolution, and anarchy.

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A view of the moral state
of society

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